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Katherine Field Caldwell

FAMILY AND BERKELEY MEMORIES, AND THE STUDY AND
PROFESSION OF ASIAN ART

With an Introduction by
Mary-Ann Lutzker

Interviews Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1992 and 1993

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Katherine F. Caldwell, 1993

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Introduction by Mary-Ann Lutzger, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Mills College.

Interviewed 1992-1993 by Suzanne B. Riess. The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Katherine Caldwell

INTRODUCTION--by Mary-Ann Lutzker, Ph.D.	1
INTERVIEW HISTORY--by Suzanne Riess	iv
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	vii
I BEGINNINGS: FAMILY HISTORY, 1906-1918	1
Kay's Parents Separate	1
Earlier Memories of Absences and Returns	3
Brother Albert and Life in Portland	7
The Charm and Intellect of Sara Bard Field	10
Sara in Pasadena Sanitarium, 1913	12
Goldfield: A Nevada Divorce, Malaria	15
In San Francisco with Mary and Lemuel Parton, 1914	18
Life with Father in Alameda, 1915	20
The 1915 Fair, The Suffragists	22
Berkeley in 1916: Houses, Playmates, Parks	23
Albert's Experiments	25
An Independent Child, Transportation	26
Father and Daughter	28
Social Isolation and Self-Consciousness	30
Uniqueness of Being the Child of a Suffrage Leader	32
Sara's First Address in San Francisco	33
II FAMILY TRAGEDY	36
The Accident, 1918, and Aftermath	36
Painful Memories, Visits	40
Sara's Breakdown	45
Presence and Influence of Charles Erskine Scott Wood	47
Kay's Life on Hold	49
III ENTERING THE ADULT WORLD	51
Women's Party Meeting, Washington, 1921, via Chicago	51
The Adult World, San Francisco	55
Rebellion, Reconciliation, Berkeley	56
Berkeley Fire, 1923	58
College Thoughts	60
People: Genevieve Taggard, Hedwiga Reicher, Ed Grabhorn	61
People: Powys Brothers, Nellie and Maurice Brown, Lincoln Steffens	64
Sexual Awareness	66
People: Tony Luhan, Ansel Adams, Ralph Stackpole	68
People: Helen and Ansley Salz, the Menuhins, and Others From the World of Music	70
People: Beniamino Bufano	74
The Home on Russian Hill	75
Los Gatos and the Marengos	77
People: Noel Sullivan	78
Poetry Talk	80

Sara and Colonel Wood as a Couple	82
Sara's Bout with Colitis, 1923	83
To Italy, January 1924	85
Languages	86
Seeing Art, and Life, in Europe with Pops	87
Paris: Frugality, Ezra Pound, <u>Ulysses</u>	89
Discoveries in a Diary, 1923	92
 IV COLLEGE YEARS	 96
College Choice	96
Wisconsin, and Alexander Meiklejohn	97
Meeting James Caldwell; Friends at Wisconsin	98
Jim, and Sara and Colonel Wood	102
Radcliffe Studies, A.N. Whitehead, and Others	104
Troubled Tutors	106
Issues of Feminism and Westernness	108
Art History, Langdon Warner	110
Marriage, and Travel Time	114
Master's Degree: Paul Sachs, and Consequences for San Francisco	114
Asian Art Studies	116
 V RETURN TO BERKELEY, ENGLISH DEPARTMENT	 118
A Job, a First Home, and a Visitor, Ella Young	118
Benjamin Lehman, "Bull" Durham, and the Bronsons and the Clines	120
The Walter Morris Harts, T.S. Eliot, and Social Mores	122
The Denneses, and the Rosses	125
Jim Caldwell's Academic and ACLU Interests	127
Friendship with Mr. Shiota	128
Ben Lehman's Circle, and Wives Judith Anderson and Henriette Durham	131
A Story About Muriel Rukeyser	133
Una and Robinson Jeffers, and a Letter, 1929	134
An Evening with Dylan Thomas, 1949	137
The Loyalty Oath	139
A Woman's Place, Women Friends	141
Josephine Miles	143
Jim Caldwell's Teaching, and His Personality	145
Having Children	149
A High Sierra Retreat, Woods Lake	152
Dan and Sara Caldwell	155
Sara Bard Field's Suicide Attempts	160
 VI CAREER: TEACHING ASIAN ART	 164
The Legion of Honor Job; Directors	164
Treasure Island Fair, Arts of the Pacific	165
About Elizabeth Huff, Alfred Salmony, Albert Bender, and Mills College	169
A Series of Job Opportunities	171
Grace McCann Morley and the San Francisco Museum of Art	173
Art History Graduate Studies, UC Berkeley, Faculty	177
Otto Maenchen and Anna Maenchen	179
More on Treasure Island, Arts of the Pacific	180
Art on the Gayway	182

Friends of Far Eastern Art, and Other Early Interest in Asian Art	183
More on Graduate Studies	185
Job at Mills College, 1951	190
Lynn White's Presidency of Mills	191
Course Work in Art History	193
The Students	194
Academic Life and Resources at Mills	196
Gallery Exhibitions at Mills	198
Professional Crisis, and Resolution	200
Further Teaching Experiences	202
Research in Japan on Nara <u>Ehon</u>	204
Continuing Professional Relationships	207
 VII THE BRUNDAGE COLLECTION	 209
The Germ of the Idea, 1958	209
A Lunch Meeting	210
Selling the Bond Issue	211
Dorothy and Morse Erskine	213
The Purpose of the Society for Asian Art	214
Rene-Yvon Lefebvre d'Argencé	215
The Docent Program	218
Jan Fontein, and the Asian Art Museum Directorship	221
Stories of Avery Brundage	222
Activities of the Society for Asian Art	224
Harry Packard	226
 VIII A TOUR OF 3 VINE LANE	 229
 APPENDICES	 241
A. "Remembering the 1923 Fire," from <u>Hillside Neighborhood Newsletter</u> , 1992.	242
B. "An American Patron, Albert Bender of San Francisco," by Katherine Field Caldwell, <u>American Federation of Arts Magazine of Art</u> , August 1938.	243
C. "Guidebook to Sexy Sculpturing," by Ralph Craib, <u>San Francisco Chronicle</u> , June 26, 1964.	249
D. "From Winckelmann to Warburg, Art History at Mills," by Mary Manning Wale, <u>Mills Magazine</u> , May-June 1972.	250
E. "Farewell to Katherine Caldwell," by Nancy Thompson Price, <u>Mills Quarterly</u> , May 1971.	255
F. "Afterword" by Katherine Field Caldwell, <u>Sara Bard Field. Poet and Suffragist</u> , The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, 1979.	256
 INDEX	 266

INTRODUCTION--by Mary-Ann Lutzker, Ph.D.

Katherine Caldwell is one of the most dynamic women I have met. At the age of eighty-five she is still deeply involved in the world of Asian art, women's issues and contemporary political events. She is a woman with liberal leanings and strong convictions, who in the midst of many a discussion about racial inequities, the deficit, the U.S involvement in Vietnam, abortion, and gender issues, has firmly proclaimed that she is a card-carrying member of the ACLU, sending out clear signals that her views are a reflection of her strong will and character.

It was during the Cambodian crisis and the turmoil of the Vietnam War that I first met Katherine in a seminar on Borobudur at the University of California, Berkeley. At the time I was a graduate student from England feeling overwhelmed by the Berkeley scene and the political events that were unfolding in Asia, particularly as Southeast Asia was to be the focus of my research. Undaunted by world events, Katherine was planning to visit the ancient Buddhist and Hindu monuments of Indonesia, where the communist regime of President Sukarno had recently been overthrown.

Katherine's participation in the seminar was instructive to all of us. She wanted to know everything about the Central Javanese monuments. Her questions were insightful and stimulating. She was determined to be an informed traveller. I found her approach inspiring, because knowing that she had recently retired from a long career teaching Asian art history, I was amazed that she would still want to pursue learning about art and culture with such intensity.

I think it may have been at this point that I realized that Katherine's inquiry into different areas of art was a lifelong passion, that learning for her would never stop, it was a way of life. Katherine's world was now opening up. No longer restricted by the limitations of the semester system, and having to travel to Asia during the unbearable heat of the summer, she would now have the freedom to go when she wanted and to stay however long she wanted.

It was during the coffee breaks that I learned that Katherine had taught Asian art history at Mills College. During our conversations she would tell us how impressed she was by the focus of the work we were doing as graduate students. However, I was far more in awe of what she had accomplished and what she was doing. We may have known a few esoteric details about some ancient South and Southeast Asian monuments. On the other hand, Katherine was knowledgeable about and had been teaching the art of China, Japan, and India. Furthermore, her area of research was Japanese art, and she was just embarking on an area of new research, the Edo period Nara-Ehon scroll paintings. Katherine was eager to explore new intellectual horizons.

It was some ten years later in 1982 that my friendship with Katherine began to develop, as also did my feminist conscience. I was now teaching at Mills in the position that Katherine had held for twenty years. Katherine was concerned about the status of Asian studies at Mills, and I sensed that she was relieved that a woman was again teaching in her area. On my way home from work I would often, and still do, stop at her elegant home on Vine Lane. Over cups of tea and glasses of wine our conversations covered Katherine's world. I learned about the problems she had teaching as a woman at a woman's college. She told me anecdotes about the attitude of the art department at Mills which was openly hostile towards art historians, and in particular female art historians.

I learned from Katherine that Sara Bard Field, the noted feminist and writer, was her mother. This explained Katherine's interest in the women's movement and her concern about the treatment of women faculty at Mills and Berkeley, and also the intensity of her questions to me about how I as a woman was managing to cope with the pressures of a professional life that demanded almost total dedication to teaching and research, and extended periods of travel abroad: how was I able to keep my family life together? Having experienced the tensions that a woman faces in trying to balance the responsibilities of being a wife, mother, and professional woman, Katherine is aware of the complexities that face women today, and I sense her concern about the seemingly unsolvable position that we find ourselves in.

Katherine has lived her life surrounded by art and artists. Growing up in the San Francisco Bay area she was influenced by her step-father's interest in Chinese furniture and Chinese paintings. As a young girl she would visit Chinatown and Chinese shops where she found that she was fascinated by the oriental world. It was not until she went to study under Langdon Warner at Harvard, however, that her latent interests in Asian aesthetics and culture developed. Fueled with a passion for things Asian, and particularly for things Japanese, Katherine was dismayed to find so few works of art on the west coast of the United States, particularly as the largest concentration of Chinese and Japanese people outside of Asia lived here in the San Francisco area.

With her strong desire to build awareness of Asian art in northern California, when she learned that Avery Brundage was contemplating finding a home for his extensive collection of Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Southeast Asian art, Katherine conceived of the idea of forming a group of interested people who would negotiate with Avery Brundage in order to encourage him to give his collection to the people of San Francisco. It was from this small group that the Society for Asian Art developed. With Katherine as a constant source of support the Society successfully persuaded Avery Brundage to bring his collection to San Francisco.

Katherine soon realized that very few people knew anything about Asian Art in the San Francisco Bay area, so she conceived the idea that the Society could provide an educational source by training docents to tell the public about the works of art. The result was the docent program that was developed with Katherine's encouragement and which became the prototype that has been emulated by museums and galleries throughout the world. Katherine is still an active member of the Society for Asian Art, and is a source of lively discourse at advisory board meetings.

The last few years have been an extraordinary test of Katherine's stamina. Beset by failing health, and often frustrated by her increasing physical limitations, she has exhibited an indomitable will to continue her work. Her interests are unflagging. Upon returning from the hospital recently she immediately went to the symphony, and then she visited the Asian Art Museum. An avid gardener all her life, she continues to delight in the passage of the seasons, so attuned to the subtle changes that are constantly occurring. She has a heightened awareness of nature and aesthetics that has grown from her love of Japanese culture.

Katherine Caldwell is a truly remarkable woman. Her mother's daughter, and a mother herself. A woman of strong convictions about the role and place of women in society today. A woman who has been determined to uphold the right of women to be independent. And a woman who has contributed immeasurably to the growth of Asian art in the Bay Area. Above all Katherine is her own person, a warm human being who has been an inspiration to me, and whose warm friendship I value and enjoy.

*Chrysanthemum dew--
Just put it in an ink-stone
And it comes to life*

(Buson, 1716-1984)¹

Mary-Ann Lutzker, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Mills College

August 1993
Oakland, California

¹This haiku addresses friendship. Chrysanthemum Dew, a special wine, is served at the Chrysanthemum Festival which is held each year on the ninth day of the ninth month in Japan. It is a symbol of friendship--both the ink-stone and the chrysanthemum are redolent with symbolism.

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Katherine Field Caldwell

In a university community as full of interesting people and goings-on as Berkeley, California is, Katherine Field Caldwell is a particularly outstanding member. Wherever she might have been set down to live her full and vital life she would have been an active participant in a multiplicity of ways: scholar working in her chosen field of Asian art; wife and mother; faculty dinner-party hostess; wonderful friend and mentor; gadfly where the bite of social conscience was needed; informed art-lover and concert-goer. But by making her home in Berkeley in 1930--a return, because she had lived in Berkeley's complex community of town and gown in her teen-age years--Katherine Caldwell entered an arena truly worthy of her.

The oral history memoir that follows is a chronicle of Katherine Caldwell's early years, her psychological and social development and expanding cultural horizons; her marriage to James Caldwell, professor of English at the University of California; and her studies in Asian art, and career in that profession. The historian is offered a unique look in depth at a span of life that begins with participation in the suffrage movement--Katherine is the daughter of suffragist Sara Bard Field [1882-1974]--and comes forward through the decades to merge with the feminist movement.

The separation and 1913 divorce of Katherine Caldwell's parents, Sara Bard Field and Albert Ehr Gott when she was seven years old, the death by auto accident of her much-loved older brother Albert Field Ehr Gott when she was twelve years old, catapulted her into adulthood in sudden and painful ways. But her bright intelligence gave her the resources and strength to be an adult, albeit well before she would have chosen. As she said in her Afterword to the Regional Oral History Office's interview with her mother, "While it was difficult to grow up in an adult world where I was expected to be more or less 'on my own,' there were considerable rewards."

It would be enough to provide the historian with that span of life referred to above, but in inviting Katherine Caldwell to be a memoirist for the Regional Oral History Office, we had in mind enriching the archive of Bay Area cultural history, and opening inquiry into the history of the Asian Art Museum, one of San Francisco's Fine Arts Museums, and into the teaching of Oriental art in the Bay Area. With her strong academic background--Wisconsin, Radcliffe, and Berkeley--tutelage from Langdon Warner, studies under Otto Maenchen, and priceless acquaintance through proximity with Oriental art, Katherine Caldwell had found her place by 1950 as an expert in Asian art. She was referred to in the 1971 Mills Quarterly as "the only contact with Asian culture for several generations of art majors."

But beyond that role, she is one of the founders and a former director of the Society for Asian Art in San Francisco. It was through her contacts that the Avery Brundage collection of Asian art came to San Francisco--the Brundage Wing of the deYoung Museum opened in 1966. That story is told in the oral history. And in her introduction to Katherine Caldwell's oral history, Associate Professor Mary-Ann Lutzger, friend and fellow Mills art history faculty, succinctly describes just how important Katherine Caldwell--Professor Caldwell--was to her and others as scholar and mentor.

The interviews with Katherine Caldwell took place in the Caldwell home in Berkeley, reached by one of the city's nearly-secret paths, Vine Lane. There she has privacy, trees, views, a garden deep below, and she lives amidst dark and beautiful carved Oriental furniture, great architectural vaulted spaces, and framed lovely opaque window light. Kay, as I called her, would always have prepared a good cup of coffee for me when I arrived for our morning interviews in Fall 1992. Sometimes she would join with a cup for herself, but as often not. She was suffering from poor health throughout the interviews--some days were good, some were very bad, and we had to cancel interviews occasionally. The pain was such that it distracted her, she felt, from offering further text on some points. At her best, that would never have happened, and she always wished, of course, to be at her best.

However, when Kay knew that she was not doing what she wanted, not getting the story told, then she would request that we go back over some parts already told, of the early years, and flesh out, or retell, or fill in facts. It is for that reason that there is no tape guide to the interviews. Sessions were often edited into earlier sessions. When Kay received the final document for her editing, again she had been so ill as to require hospitalization, but she made a valiant effort to review the mass of transcript, and made accurate and important corrections.

The illustrations for the oral history come from a quite remarkable store of photographs, taken by excellent Bay Area photographers. At the time of doing the oral history, Kay's reserves of strength were also being put to the task of assigning a future to her wonderful objects of art, many inherited from her mother and her stepfather, Charles Erskine Scott Wood, including furniture and rugs. She was also having made archivally-permanent a group of early Ansel Adams photographs, taken of her wedding to Jim Caldwell. One is among the photographic illustrations to the oral history.

The appendices to the oral history include Afterword by Katherine Caldwell, written in 1979, a passionate statement of a woman's recollection of her relationship with her family, in particular her mother. The reader of the oral history will be aware of the presence, sometimes more, sometimes less, of Sara Bard Field throughout. The

Regional Oral History Office's interview with Field, Poet and Suffragist, came out in 1979, one of the Suffragists Oral History Project series. That interview, forty-six sessions recorded between 1959 and 1963, was one of earliest undertaken by the oral history office, and was a landmark compendium. Katherine Caldwell's memoir, Family and Berkeley Memories, and the Study and Profession of Asian Art, stands quite on its own, a story of a new generation, a new time, but behind her looms a large figure, and the reader is referred to the Field text for more on the San Francisco of the 1920s.

Readers are also referred to oral histories completed on University of California history, and on the arts and social history. In particular, see Benjamin Lehman, Josephine Miles and George Stewart, English department; art department, Stephen C. Pepper; philosophy, Will Dennes; Berkeley history, Ella Barrows Hagar, Bernice Hubbard May; the arts, Ansel Adams, Ruth Cravath, Dorothea Lange, Elsie Whitaker Martinez, Kathleen Norris, Grace McCann Morley, Rudolph Schaeffer, Helen Arnstein Salz.

James R. K. Kantor, University Archivist Emeritus, recognizing the exceptional story Katherine Caldwell had to tell, the richness of the cultural life she had witnessed and to which she had so greatly contributed, spearheaded the project. The Regional Oral History Office thanks him, as it has so often in the past, for his support, and his as always excellent proofreading skills. My thanks to Kay for her hard work--going back in time isn't easy--and a friendship gained in the interviews. And the text is enriched by Mary-Ann Lutzger's introduction, turning back the pages of history and telling her story of Katherine Caldwell.

The Regional Oral History Office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, and is an administrative division of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer/Editor

October 1, 1993
The Regional Oral History office
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University of California, Berkeley

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name KATHERINE CALDWELL

Date of birth 4/11/06 Birthplace Cleveland, Ohio

Father's full name ALBERT EHRGOTT

Occupation Clergyman Birthplace Cincinnati, Ohio

Mother's full name SARA BARD FIELD WOOD

Occupation Post and Sundry worker Birthplace Detroit, Michigan

Your spouse (deceased) JAMES RALSTON CALDWELL

Occupation Prof. English literature Birthplace Albert Lea, Minnesota

Your children SARA CALDWELL

DANIEL RALSTON CALDWELL

Where did you grow up? In Berkeley Ca

Present community Berkeley

Education UNIV of Wisconsin (freshman + sophomore years) Radcliffe College B.A.

HARVARD, MA.

Occupation(s) Museum work (Legion of Honor, de Young, S.F. Museum of Art)

Professor, Asian Art, Mills College

Areas of expertise Chinese and Japanese art

Other interests or activities Chamber and symphony music

Travel especially in England and Asia.

Organizations in which you are active writing workshop (U.C.) women Geographers

I BEGINNINGS: FAMILY HISTORY, 1906-1918

Kay's Parents Separate

Caldwell: I think this oral history should begin with what was the most traumatic event of my life, and that was when my mother announced to me that she was going to leave my father. I was six years old and unsuspecting of any discord between them. So when she said, "Kay, I'm going to leave your father, do you want to stay with him or come with me?" I was absolutely stunned. I couldn't believe it. And of course, in those days people--nobody got a divorce, so to speak. It was unthinkable. I hadn't really known about husbands and wives separating.

I loved both my mother and my father, but like most children I was closer to my mother, and so I opted to go with her. But the fact I had to make such a crucial decision has stayed with me all my life, and for that reason I feel that starting this oral history with that event is of importance.

Also, having to make that decision I think has made it very hard for me to make decisions all the rest of my life. I can remember going into a library with my mother when I was very small and seeing all the books and almost crying with the thought that I would never be able to read all those books. How could I decide? And that is still with me, right to this moment.

Riess: Do you think you believed that she would really go away?

Caldwell: I knew she was going away. But she was away so much, you see, so going away--[laughs]. And I hadn't thought of it until this moment, but that may have greatly influenced my decision to go with her.

It was a very, very hard decision. And I liked things as they were. Most children do prefer what they're accustomed to. I thought a moment, and I said, "Oh, I'll go with you." And that was that. I don't remember any subsequent conversation about it. And I can't remember--maybe I was traumatized to such a point that I blot out the specific memories of immediately what happened afterwards. I have no memory whatsoever, except that event stands out in my mind, as a shattering decision.

Riess: There was not a family council?

Caldwell: No, no, not at all.

Riess: Just between the two of you.

Caldwell: Yes.

My mother used to tell me later about how disapproving she was of my father's disciplining of my brother, and her remonstrance. For example, when my brother almost set the place on fire, my father I think put something hot on him. Not to burn him, but to give him an idea of how severe a situation it might produce. But I don't ever remember my mother and father quarreling. Now, this may just have been that they secluded themselves in another room when they had their differences, I don't know. I have no remembrance whatsoever.

I also was very much impressed with my mother's absences.

Riess: I wonder if you thought that after a while she'd come back.

Caldwell: No. I knew it was final. I sensed it. This was the real, final parting. How I knew that, I don't know, but I did. I had no doubt. It was a frightful, frightful anguish, a very great anguish. I can feel to this day how I felt at that moment. I also knew I couldn't do anything about it, had to face up to it. I have lots of faults, but apparently my strength of character stood by me [laughs]--was developed at that point.

Riess: You knew you couldn't do anything about your mother and father.

Caldwell: No. I suppose most children realize that they can't really influence them in grave decisions. But I realized it was an irreversible situation; I sensed it was irreversible. No use to plead, "Oh, do stay home," or something like that. It never occurred to me to beg her to stay.

Riess: Did you earlier?

Caldwell: No, I only remember wishing she were there more. I don't remember thinking, "Isn't it awful that she's not," or "Why doesn't she?" I only remember having a great sense of emptiness and wishing, but never--I don't remember censoring her ever.

My mother wrote a poem at some point--it wasn't published--that I came across. My daughter and I were looking at it the other day. It was called, "To A Sad Child." And it was about controlling my tears, holding them back, and that kind of thing. But I don't remember feeling sorry for myself at all. This was the way it was.

Riess: Well, these are strengths of character, aren't they?

Caldwell: I never thought until this moment that it was a strength of character--at the moment of decision, of going with her. But it was a very great wrench, because I was very fond of my father and brother, too.

Riess: Now, this separation from your father, she had met the Colonel by then?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, but I didn't know anything about that, I hadn't the faintest idea. Well, I had met him once when I was a little girl, and he came to the house. I was four. I was out in the potato patch next to the house, and it was the first time I ever saw a car, a motor vehicle--a private car. He was driven up. I had no idea who he was, that he had any relationship to my mother other than any other friend. I was completely ignorant of this. I hadn't the faintest idea why she was leaving my father.

Earlier Memories of Absences and Returns

Riess: When are some of your earlier memories? You were born in Cleveland in 1906.

Caldwell: Oh, I have a few memories, but they're not of any importance. I remember that we lived in a house that had an old streetcar abandoned in the backyard we used to play in. And my brother Albert was a great tease, but he always had a kind of paternal attitude toward me, which was well-emphasized later on in life.

I can remember his taking me out on a sled in the snow. And I can remember a dog that we had. And I can remember my sense of guilt, which is very strong to this day, always feeling

I'm doing the wrong thing, or often, because of a little girl who was brought to visit who couldn't crawl up the stairs, and I didn't want her to play with my favorite toy, which I put out of her reach. I was very severely lectured to about my selfishness.

Another early memory: I had adenoids, and because I snored I was disturbing the sleep of my family and put out in the hall to sleep. I have that sense of guilt for those two things which has never left me. I have never forgotten those. Those are my memories of Cleveland. And the snow, I do remember the snow.

When my parents moved from Cleveland to Portland, Oregon, they must have been very anxious themselves. I wasn't yet four--I had my fourth birthday in Portland--and I ran around saying, "Have you got the tickets? Have you got the keys?" Well, now a child of three couldn't think this, it had to have been transferred, that anxiety.

I have been an anxious person all of my life. I am not blaming anyone, heaven knows. This is the way it was. But I attribute my anxiety to this. I don't know.

Riess: It was not a good move for your family?

Caldwell: Well, any move for a small child is something that is stressful.

Riess: But I mean, you were taking on their anxiety?

Caldwell: I think so. This is just a guess, you know. After all, I was only three.

I have no other memories of Cleveland except the fact that we had steep steps going up to the house, and as I mentioned, the abandoned streetcar, and that was a great plus for my brother, because his friends all loved to come and play there.

Riess: Tell me about the memories of Portland.

Caldwell: In Portland my father, as he always did, managed, for all of his small income, to find a very nice house. It was a large house, with four bedrooms, and it had a huge empty lot next to it that I don't think belonged to my father, but it had potatoes planted in it.

I remember lots of playing with my brother, and my mother always leaving the house. I did have a sense of wishing to see her, and that she were home more. But I wasn't criticizing her for this. It just was a kind of longing.

Caldwell: One early memory, from when I was four years old, was very influential on the rest of my life. [laughter] I mean, it was in a way another awful decision to have had to make.

Christmas was approaching, and my father, a clergyman, said, "We must send a barrel of presents to the missionaries in Burma. They're very poor, and they have very little in their lives. Now Katherine, you go and get a toy." So I went and got a battered toy.

My father said, "Oh, no. Not something like that. Something that you are fond of." Whereupon, tears streaming down my face, I got my favorite teddy bear, and gave it. It was a bear that was such a support in my life, psychologically, that it was a very, very great sacrifice for me to make.

My children always were very impressed with this story, and it became sort of a custom to give Mother a teddy bear for a birthday, or for going off for a trip or something like that. And my son gave me a bear when he left for college, to hug.

Riess: And when you were four, you think you were already needing a lot of support?

Caldwell: I never sensed the tension between my mother and father, but my mother was home very little, and I think that may have been it. She was always leaving for her suffrage work. And of course, as I mentioned in the "Afterword" to my mother's oral history, being with her was such a shining experience. So her absence was a great contrast to the joy we had in her companionship.

My brother and I--there are such small, rather trivial memories then, you know. You see, it was not very long after this that my mother left my father. But one nice motherly thing I remember about my mother, on Sunday evenings she was home with us--usually she did reserve Sunday night for us--and we had Triscuits, which still exist in the stores to this day. I have them right in my kitchen right now.

She would butter the Triscuits and toast them. We had those and hot chocolate Sunday evenings. That was time that she would be with us. Otherwise, she was always with other people. And once in a while she'd cook something. Not very often, but she would cook something. Maybe she'd cook more often than I remember.

Riess: Would she involve you with that?

Caldwell: No, no, not at all. But she learned how to make an apple pie that was very good. My brother always looked forward to that. But those were events. I mean, usually you assume that your mother is going to be in the kitchen cooking, but for us it was kind of an event for her to be doing anything like that.

Riess: Was your father sort of a darker personality than your mother?

Caldwell: I was very fond of my father, he was very dear to both my brother and me, and loved us dearly. No, I didn't think that. The darker part of my father's nature came out after the divorce, and then we were living with him. And one of the hard things about living with him was not that he wasn't kind and good to us, but that he never could distance himself from the anguish he felt and the anger.

He was angry for several reasons: first of all, his life was shattered by my mother's leaving him. He greatly admired her, as well as loved her. The other, and I think most galling experience for him, was the disgrace, you see, from his point of view, that she was suffering socially by the love affair with a married man. So there was both the anguish of losing her, and the jealousy--that's another factor, of course--and the sense that her reputation was being dragged in the dirt.

All of these things added up to a fury within him that could never be eliminated. He was focused on this, and of course, we were reminders of the fact that his family was broken up. I don't mean for a moment that he wasn't a kind and loving father to us; he was. But he was obsessed with anger and bitterness.

Riess: You probably tried to make up in some way for your mother's absence, too.

Caldwell: Yes. I remember the first time that I ever felt sorry for him, had that feeling. He used to sit at the piano sometimes in the evening playing hymns--in Berkeley that was, of course. There was one that the words are, "Earth hath no sorrow that Heaven cannot remove." And the tune to it was very melancholy. I remember once feeling his loneliness, for a poignant moment. But children--I was pretty young, and children don't really understand the anguish of adults.

Riess: No, adults want to spare them that.

Brother Albert and Life in Portland

Riess: Let's step back a bit, and talk about your childhood memories, and your family life then.

Caldwell: I remember in Portland I went to kindergarten alone on the streetcar. In those days, people didn't-- I don't know whether it was just my family or not, but they certainly didn't take children from place to place the way they do now. I was on my own.

Riess: Your brother Albert preceded you.

Caldwell: Yes, he was five years older, you see, so he was in school.

Riess: In fact, he must have been very much the big brother.

Caldwell: Oh, yes, he was, very much so. Of course, much more so after my parents separated.

I didn't know, of course, at the time, even in Portland, how different my life was from other children, who "came home to Mother" and had the family together, because of my mother's almost constant absence. But I think deep down inside I felt a loneliness.

I did start school there, and I remember I was very, very advanced in reading, and probably the slowest in arithmetic. I was conscious of that. And I remember once being admonished by the teacher for too much pride, as I mentioned the fact that Eugene Field, the poet, was a member of the Field family, my mother's family.

Riess: When Sara was home, did she take an interest in your school work?

Caldwell: No, I don't ever remember her having any interest in what we were doing in school. But she always played with us, and we just had the most glorious times, laughter and fun. And the Triscuits. We always looked forward to that.

There was a friend of my father's, a religious man, he used to drop in unwanted, and we were so afraid that he would come and intrude on our Sunday night gatherings that we turned all the lights out and went to a room where he couldn't have seen that anyone was home. To be sure he--Mr. Banks, his name was--didn't drop in and spoil our little private gathering.

I don't ever remember wondering why my mother was away and other children's mothers were not. That didn't occur to me even to think about that. And I don't remember ever feeling any resentment whatsoever--this was just the way it was.

I remember coming home from school and getting something to eat, some fruit or something. And I remember occasionally playing with my brother. He devised a kind of way of making cigarettes out of crumbling up leaves in the garden, and smoking them. Then he would get me to promise I would never tell. That he held over me for anything he didn't want known about himself, "Don't you tell about my cigarettes." Of course, it was not tobacco or anything at all injurious.

Riess: Did you think he really had a strong rebellious streak?

Caldwell: Oh, no, I just thought he was the most wonderful person, and that he was always someone I felt was very companionable, in spite of his endless teasing.

Riess: He was more conscious, surely, of the atmosphere of the household, being nine years old.

Caldwell: We never discussed it. We never talked about my mother and father. We always just talked about my mother and how wonderful it would be to see her. But we never talked about relationships between them at all.

Riess: Did he have more of a life outside of the house?

Caldwell: Oh, yes. I think he did. He was off with the boys.

Riess: And was there a housekeeper in Portland?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, there always was--. Well, there was someone who came in and did the housework and cooking, yes. I remember that. I never felt very close to any of those people. I never felt they were mother figures or anything of that sort.

Riess: Were they black?

Caldwell: No, white. I don't ever remember--I think the first time I ever saw a black person was many years later in San Francisco. I was not even conscious of racial differences.

Riess: Do you think they were chosen to be mother substitutes?

Caldwell: Oh, not at all. They were probably Irish--I'm just guessing. No, they were just uneducated, highly uneducated. I sensed the

social difference--I think children do sense those things--not like their parents at all.

Riess: You said you were reading early?

Caldwell: I dearly loved reading. That was the part of school I thought was most entertaining.

My brother used to--. Half the door of each classroom, the upper part, was in glass, so you could look in. And he'd come by and wave to me or signal to me, and then I'd make the excuse to go to the bathroom, and go out and see him for a moment or so. So we did have kind of a comradely rapport. And that is a vivid memory of that kind of bond.

My father loved to celebrate occasions like birthdays and Christmas very much. That always was true. And later on, in Berkeley, I was much impressed with that, too. I don't mean to say that he wasn't the very kindest--just frightfully wrapped up in his church work. And naturally you don't expect a father to be home in the daytime anyway, do you?

Riess: You were living in a large house?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, we had a large house, in I think a nice part of Portland. We always had a nice house. Somehow he managed that. But we lived very minimally.

Riess: You went on to have a career surrounded by art and visual material. Do you remember beautiful things in your surroundings?

Caldwell: Nothing in Portland, no. Not in Berkeley either.

The first time that I was aware was after my mother and Colonel Wood established the house in San Francisco, and it was full of art treasures. Before then I never thought about it. Art as such didn't exist for me. My father was very fond of nature, so the beauty of Yosemite or something like that impressed me. But then that was not unlike any child, going to a place of such magnificence. And that was later on, after I was living with my father after the divorce.

The Charm and Intellect of Sara Bard Field

Riess: When Sara left the house to go out in Portland, was there a glamorous air to her?

Caldwell: Oh, I wouldn't have thought in those terms then. Later on, when I went with her to Washington when I was fourteen, to the Women's Party, I was very much aware of her glamour. But then I didn't think of her in those terms. Later on I realized that she was probably more attractive to men than any woman I've ever known, and I still claim this.

She had a charm and kind of appeal. Whoever it was, whether it was a clerk in a store--she really looked at people and really gave herself over completely to whomever she was with, and that makes people very happy, I think. "You're the only one," whether you're selling me gloves or whether you're the head of an organization or just a friend. Or a child.

Riess: And it was genuine.

Caldwell: Yes, it was genuine. My daughter feels that my mother had--this, of course, was a more mature, much later evaluation--that my mother had this great desire to be liked. My daughter puts it down to an intense egotism. But I don't see it quite so harshly.

Riess: And was she very feminine?

Caldwell: That impressed me when I was fourteen and went East with her to Washington, the fact that she was so intellectual, so articulate, and yet had such great feminine charm. When I was an adolescent, and thought in terms of male and female charms or lack thereof, that very much impressed me.

And as I grew older I was fascinated by this because of her intellectuality--she wasn't a woman who depended on makeup and clothes and hairdos. She always looked perfectly beautiful, but not in a fashionable way. I don't remember her even--she'd love to have nice clothes, but it wasn't an obsession with her.

She never suppressed her intellectual powers in order to make a man feel superior. I was very much aware at a certain time in my life that women were supposed--shouldn't win a tennis game even though they could, or speak up in class, to be more bright than a boy. So that's the reason I noticed this.

She also was able to express her own views very clearly. I'll never forget, once in Chicago I went to a luncheon where Clarence Darrow, the famous lawyer, was speaking. I never could understand his attitude towards women, because he was attracted to intellectual women, though his own wife was not. He talked about, "Why should a man be required to stay with a woman after he's impregnated her with a child? Animals don't do that." And my mother was furious.

At the question period in this enormous lunch at this enormous hotel she just took him on--I can remember it now--fiercely. Flaming cheeks, you know. I was always impressed with her utter fearlessness to stand by what she believed in public. I think maybe it's rather surprising that I ever was able to get up and lecture to large groups of people, but I could do that on my own subject. I could never have taken on, in an adversarial kind of way, other people. Aggressively, I mean.

Riess: And was she ever reduced to tears of frustration in a situation like that?

Caldwell: I don't remember that. She would be very angry, but no, I don't think I remember her weeping.

Another time when she was very upset was when the Women's Party was formed, and she didn't feel they were taking a liberal stance. It became the League of Women Voters, I think. No, that wasn't it. But anyway, the successor to the Women's Party she felt was too conservative. And I remember how upset she was about that.

Riess: And did you find yourself being a listener for her?

Caldwell: I don't remember. She treated me as an adult, from adolescence on. She made me feel very, very much that she cared about my opinion about her poetry, and she dedicated her first book, you know, "To Albert, who is not here to read", and "To Kay, who has read and understood." And even when I was in college she would send me her poems for my opinion. So I felt very, very much that she cared about my opinion about her work. In this sense, we had a very good interchange. I didn't feel she was condescending ever on this, ever.

Sara in Pasadena Sanitarium, 1913

Riess: What year did you leave Portland?

Caldwell: Well, that would then be I guess 1913. Meanwhile I stayed on with my father, and it was then that I went down to stay with my Aunt Mary in Los Angeles. She took me to visit my mother in the sanitarium.

Riess: You came with her when she went to the hospital to see whether she had tuberculosis?

Caldwell: I have no memory of that whatsoever, not any. It might never have happened, as far as I remember.

I only remember--and that's why I thought, and mistakenly, I'd gone directly from Portland to Goldfield after she told me she was leaving my father--the only memory I have, my contact with her after she then left, was that I went down to visit my Aunt Mary in Los Angeles, and I stayed with my aunt.

My aunt was in love with Clarence Darrow, and he came to dinner. I had to sleep on the floor in the kitchen while they were eating. I always apparently had trouble sleeping, because I kept being wakened by Clarence Darrow's guffaws, violent shaking laughter. I just hated the man, because he kept me awake. [laughter] (I told this story to a man who was writing a book on Darrow, by the way, and on my aunt.)

I also remember being interrogated by a truant officer: "Why was I not in school?" And feeling quite nervous about this. Then I remember going to see my mother in the sanitarium, and she has quite a lot to say in her diary about her life then.

Riess: Had you known your Aunt Mary well?

Caldwell: Yes, I had a good rapport with her then, not later on.

My Aunt Mary was a brilliant woman. She never realized her talents by writing a book, but she wrote the most extraordinary letters and was a brilliant journalist. She and my mother always had a kind of--well, my Aunt Mary was rather jealous of her sister, because her sister somehow made her mark on the world in a way Mary did not. But they were close, and as time went on my aunt was very possessive of my mother. This created a little difficulty.

In this diary my mother wrote when she was in the sanitarium she just makes a passing--very few references to me or my brother.

Riess: This is the diary that you've just recently found?

Caldwell: Yes. This is in 1913. Las Encinas is the name of this hospital in Pasadena. She says--it's a little hard to read, it's sort of bleached out green ink--"The child"--meaning me--"is a marvel of tender sympathy and passionate affection. Poor little soul! The world holds much suffering for her."

"And then we joined Thelma for lunch," she goes right on, you see. [laughter] That fascinated me.

And then here's, "Kay overheard Mary"--that's her sister Mary--"speaking about Mr. Somebody-or-other going to prison. She asked the cause, and Mary told her it was because Mr. T. had cared for the poor people. 'Well, I'd better look out,' said Kay, 'I gave a doll to a poor child last Christmas.'" [laughter]

I went through her diary to see her references to my brother and me. They were very few.

Riess: How long were you visiting down there?

Caldwell: This I can't figure out. I had thought it was just an occasional weekend, but Mother says in her oral history that I went down to stay with my aunt. I can't think that my father would have allowed me to stay down there very long.

Riess: Because he would have disapproved?

Caldwell: Yes, and also my schooling.

Riess: And you didn't enter school down there?

Caldwell: No. I think my mother exaggerates the number of times I saw her there. To tell you the truth, I only remember going to see her once, but apparently I'm wrong about that.

Riess: We know from the oral history, from your mother herself, that this was not a tuberculosis sanitarium; it was a sanitarium for people recovering from "nervous exhaustion." Do you remember anything of the actual place?

Caldwell: I only remember--a frightful memory--that one of the hospital workmen, thinking he was going to entertain this child, said,

"Come on, I'll show you something interesting," and he took me down to look out a window where a chicken had just had its head cut off, and it was running around headless. It shocked me deeply. I've never gotten over that, really. That's the only memory I have. That, and Darrow keeping me awake at night, and the truant officer.

Riess: Was your mother always a diarist?

Caldwell: No. She says here in the beginning of this one something about it being unlike her to keep a diary. And I was interested in that. [reading] "It is years since I've kept a diary. This, I feel, will be merely 'kept' and rust out rather than wear out." That's the way she starts this out. That's the first of January, 1913.

It's a very interesting book, though, because although she is ill she makes many, many references to literature and what she's reading. I was interested in it because my brother and I seemed such incidental episodes to her life at that time.

Riess: Was your brother also visiting periodically?

Caldwell: I don't remember, and I don't ever remember going with him. I don't remember seeing him there at all; I may have and have forgotten about that.

Riess: Does she make any references that clarify what kind of treatment she was getting?

Caldwell: I haven't made note of these, so I couldn't say. I haven't made note of anything in this particular diary except references to myself and my brother.

[reading] Oh, yes, apropos of leaving, on the 21st of May she says, "Left this morning for Goldfield...I wrote Albert on the train telling him the purpose of my changed situation--poor Albert." That is, however, my father, not my brother. But there is a reference to my brother and how manly he is, and how well he understood the situation, unlike his sister who didn't. "Little Kay is, of course, too small to understand."

Riess: Are there references to doctors or treatment or getting well?

Caldwell: Yes, there are references there where she wonders whether she has tuberculosis or not, and there is a reference, in fact, similar to what you read in the oral history, to the strain. Something seemed to be on her mind.

I'm sorry I didn't have a chance to read this through again, I was just thinking in terms of my relationship to her. But I think she's probably recounted that pretty accurately. The excuse I always heard, and this I heard when I was quite young, was that maybe the possibility of tuberculosis was just an excuse for getting her out of Portland. In those days, people didn't talk about nervous breakdowns, you know. Those were hush-hush. Even later on, when she did have one, years later.

Riess: So it might have been arranged by Pops [Charles Erskine Scott Wood].

Caldwell: Yes, he financed it, you see. My father certainly couldn't afford to do that.

Riess: And Darrow's part? Since it was on Darrow's recommendation that she go to Goldfield rather than Reno, according to Sara's oral history, are there any references to conversations about that?

Caldwell: I'll have to go through it more carefully. I haven't read it with that care.

Goldfield: A Nevada Divorce. Malaria

Riess: When she headed to Goldfield, you had packed all of your belongings? Did you come then down on the train by yourself?

Caldwell: No, no. I never traveled alone at that time. I traveled on a train by myself when I was four up to Seattle to visit my Aunt Marion, but after that, I didn't travel alone from one city to another.

Riess: Do you remember getting yourself organized to leave Portland?

Caldwell: No, not at all. Nothing. I don't remember it at all. I remember the arrival in Goldfield, and the house we had, but I don't remember any of the travel arrangements.

Mother rented a house in Goldfield.

Riess: Tell about Goldfield.

Caldwell: I didn't like it. It was very dry and forbidding--I wouldn't have been able to use the word forbidding at that time. We lived right across the street from the only bit of greenery,

green grass, in Goldfield. The house there was owned by the owner of the gold mine. But we had a dreary little house.

Riess: Was the dreariness of it compensated for by the fact that you were at last with this mother you missed so much?

Caldwell: No. I don't think so. I think the fact that she was still occupied with other concerns repeated the pattern. I hadn't thought of that until now, but I think it repeated the pattern of her not being there, although she did a great deal of writing at her typewriter at home.

I know the school seemed to me very difficult to have to adjust to. Looking back on it, it seemed to me a dreadful school. It was right opposite the courthouse. The teacher's method of disciplining the bad children was to say, "Well, I'll take you across to the police if you don't--" She didn't say that to me. I was all too good a child, you know. [laughs]

I remember one child who wanted to go to the bathroom, and she didn't let him go, and he urinated in front of the class. He couldn't help it. And I remember how embarrassed we all were, and how distressed the teacher was. But anyway, these are minor things.

Riess: So your days were mostly taken up with school.

Caldwell: Yes, pretty much so. I had one friend who I realized in later life was a daughter of a prostitute. She used to do all kinds of dances, shouting, "Red light, red light!" I had no idea the significance of the dances or what she was saying. And I remember calling on a child with my mother who was so poor that they had a dirt floor, and our taking food to them there. These are fragmentary memories. I remember gypsies coming through the town.

But mostly, as far as my relation to my mother is concerned, I remember this terrible anxiety I had. She would leave in the evening and not tell me. She didn't think that I had any--she wouldn't have said "any business to know," but that was really the idea, her life was as she was to live it. So I would listen to her typewriter to hear whether it was being used or not.

And then I also described in the oral history "Afterword" one time I couldn't stand it any longer, being alone. I got up and went to a neighbor's house in the middle of the night. She came home, of course, and I was gone. And she was very, very severe about scolding me about having done this. I don't blame

her for that, but still, I was really finding it very difficult to be alone in the wee hours of the morning.

Riess: Do you think people in Goldfield understood what a single woman and her daughter were doing there?

Caldwell: I don't know. I have a feeling that they were nice to me, but I don't remember who they were, what they looked like. Just that I needed refuge, with people.

My mother always took me to the hotel for lunch on Sundays, and when we were together she was playful and acted warmly. She would buy me grape juice when she had a glass of wine. She'd make me feel grown up.

And my Aunt Mary came to visit us while she was there. That was when I grew to hostility toward my Aunt Mary, though. She was a very difficult woman. We all found her very difficult. As I grew older I realized that this was something shared by a great many people. But at the same time, she was brilliant, and I just loved her husband. I thought he was one of the--I still think he was one of the nicest men I ever knew in my whole life, Lemuel Parton. He was a newspaperman.

Riess: Did Colonel Wood visit you in Goldfield?

Caldwell: Oh, no, he never came there. There was this extraordinary mysterious communication, a code they devised for telegrams.

I forgot to say in the "Afterword" that when I was in Goldfield I came down with malarial fever. My mother had to take me down on the railroad train to Oakland. They had to wire ahead when I was on the train for ice, because of course there was no electrical refrigeration. My father, my own father, met us with an ambulance, and I was taken to the hospital, where Kaiser Hospital is now.

That I should perhaps record, because again it's my abandonment by my mama--[laughs]. I lay in that hospital bed. In those days, of course, there was no radio, and you had to be in the dark, so there was no looking at books or reading or anything. I just lay there, hour in and hour out, by myself.

Riess: How long were you in the hospital?

Caldwell: Well, I think I couldn't be accurate about that, but I would say a week to ten days, maybe two weeks--I really don't know.

Riess: And your mother had to go back to Goldfield?

Caldwell: I don't know where she stayed then, whether she stayed with my aunt in San Francisco or what she did. I don't know. She came to see me for short times.

Funny, I don't remember my father coming to see me, but he must have done. I remember his meeting us at the pier, and I can remember feeling some apprehension about the fact that he and my mother were going to meet again, because by this time I realized of course that they were not friends any more.

Riess: Were you an unusually small child?

Caldwell: Well, I only weighed something like four pounds when I was born. My mother was told not to eat much so that the birth would be easier. That's what she told me, anyway. No, I don't think--I don't remember. I am so short, but I was taller than my grandmother, her mother. And I never--even to this day, when people mention, particularly men, how short I am, I don't think that I'm short at all. I'm just me. [laughs]

Riess: Your mother refers to "Little Kay" all the time.

Caldwell: No, no, that's age. Little Kay, as against Big Brother. No, the Little Kay had nothing to do with height. "Dear Little Kay," "Poor Little Darling," you know. If I had been six feet, I would have been Little Kay at that time.

Riess: [laughs] I see.

When you were out of the hospital you were returned to Goldfield?

Caldwell: Yes. I'm surprised that my father didn't intervene about that, but he didn't. I think he was so sure he would win the divorce suit.

Riess: And that he would win custody?

Caldwell: Yes. You see, the only way my mother was able to get her divorce without further contest on my father's part was to give up my brother and me to my father's custodianship. That was the "deal," so to speak.

In San Francisco with Mary and Lemuel Parton, 1914

Riess: Then you returned to San Francisco.

Caldwell: Yes, that's right. And I lived at 1623 Lake Street in San Francisco with my Aunt Mary and her husband, in a little place my aunt called The Flower Pot, that's still there. A little tiny house with a big garden in front.

My uncle, my aunt's husband, was doing newspaper work for the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, on the marina. They built on some filled land for that, and the Palace of Fine Arts still stands. I remember PPIE--I wondered why they spelled pipe the wrong way.

Riess: Is that why they were up in San Francisco, because of his work?

Caldwell: Lem Parton was on the staff of the San Francisco Bulletin.

Riess: What are your recollections of the Fair?

Caldwell: I remember being taken to the art museum and saying that when I grew up I was never going to a museum. A joke, because my degree at Harvard was in museum work. There I just remember being very tired of being dragged around.

Since the court awarded custodianship of my brother and me to my father I was obliged to go to my father's house in Alameda where we lived for one year before my father got the house here in Berkeley. I remember being taken the night that the lights on the Tower of Jewels, which was a famous landmark for the Fair, were turned out forever. My father let me stay up, and I was with my own father then.

Riess: When you were with your Aunt Mary, was your mother also there?

Caldwell: No, she was off doing suffrage work. She wasn't there at all.

Riess: She recovered from this nervous breakdown, tuberculosis, divorce thing, she just snapped back?

Caldwell: That's right. She was right back. She was doing suffrage work.

Riess: Did she explain to you the meaning of her suffrage work?

Caldwell: No, it wasn't until I went East with her when I was fourteen that I knew what it was all about. That's another whole story in itself.

But I did want to say that when I was in San Francisco, staying with my aunt and uncle, I went to a public school mostly patronized by children from an orphanage. My Aunt Mary was never home. It seemed to be my fate as a child never to have

anybody home when I came home from school. She would leave me little notes and little candies and so on, and funny little verses. But mostly I was on the street playing with the children after school. That was, of course, a help.

Life with Father in Alameda. 1915

Caldwell: Then my father insisted that the court order be fulfilled, and we moved over to Alameda where he had gotten a house. He had the most marvelous housekeeper. She was a retired schoolteacher from Honolulu, and her name was Percy Dillon. I loved her dearly. She was the first person who was there all the time, who was a mother figure. I never thought of her as a substitute for my mother for one minute; I always was lamenting my mother's absence.

My mother would sometimes be detained in Washington at Christmas, and it was particularly upsetting to me, and I remember my brother was so marvelous about that. There are letters that my mother kept that he wrote to her, to reassure her, "I will break the news to dear little Kay." [laughs] Always, "Poor, dear little Kay."

Anyway, Miss Dillon wrote a letter to my mother, which she kept, about what charming, delightful, intelligent children we were. And we just adored that woman.

Another story--while I was in Alameda my father wanted me baptized, and in the Baptist Church, you know, you are totally immersed. I had on the most white beautiful clothes, embroidered little slip, embroidered dress, white stockings. I remember I was examined, so to speak, about what I knew about Christianity, but I just repeated the things I was supposed to say.

My brother, who was a terrible trickster, knew I didn't know anything about swimming, and he said, "Now, when you're under the water, take a deep breath." And here I was in these beautiful clothes coming up coughing, and unable to do anything but be humiliated by this! I remember the baptism very, very well, and the clergyman saying, "Do you, Katherine, take the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior?" And it meant nothing to me in terms of any feeling.

I never had any religious feelings about Christianity whatsoever, until later years when music meant so much to me.

But I wanted to have the grape juice at Communion. I thought it was simply wonderful to have the grape juice, and that was really the reason why I went through all of this.

Riess: Your father didn't prepare you for this religious moment?

Caldwell: Well, I always deadpanned with my father. I didn't know that term, that I was taking an attitude of that sort, but I remember later on I just couldn't bear to hurt his feelings.

Many years later, when I was about sixteen, we were camping in the Big Sur down south of Carmel. We had gone in with horses with our supplies, and my precious dog, and we were left there with the idea that we'd be called for later with the horses coming back. (We ran out of food and had to walk back.)

But I remember on that trip, under the skies, stars, my father said, "I hope that you'll never fail to think of our Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior." And I remember hating to tell a lie, and just saying, "Mm," or something. Not committing myself, but feeling, "I cannot hurt his feelings. This is his life, it would break his heart." But I also hated to tell a lie, so I just deadpanned it.

Riess: I was enchanted to read in the "Afterword" that during summers you slept outside.

Caldwell: Oh, yes, we slept on a porch. My own father was a great health enthusiast, and he believed it was a good idea to sleep outdoors. So when we were over in Alameda--we lived in Alameda for one year before my father exchanged his Portland house for the Berkeley one--there was a porch there, and our beds were out there. And we always played games, word games, before we went to sleep. He [Albert] was a great trickster and very humorous. I was sort of solemn, but he always jollied me up.

Riess: Why did you leave Alameda?

Caldwell: My father wanted very much to have us grow up in a special environment, so he found a house in one of the nicest parts of Berkeley.

Riess: What did he mean by special?

Caldwell: Educationally, and socially. He wanted us to live in a cultivated, educational environment. And he thought Berkeley was just the idea. How he ever managed to exchange that house in Portland for one of the nicest parts of Berkeley has always astonished me. He always, for all his very, very limited

resources, managed to provide a very nice house, in a "good" neighborhood.

The 1915 Fair. The Suffragists

Riess: At the Fair your mother was manning a booth for the Congressional Union?

Caldwell: Yes. And it was from there that she went in '16, you see, across the country on that famous tour where she accumulated an enormous number of signatures in favor of the suffrage amendment.

Riess: Chita Fry sums up the period from 1910 to 1920 of your mother's life as occupied with suffrage. Do you have stories of these individuals, Alice Paul, Emma Wold, Anne Martin, Mabel Vernon?

Caldwell: Anne Martin I knew somewhat. Those women were just very dear friends of my mother's, and important people in the political world, but I didn't know them very well. Except Emma Wold, I knew her very well, and loved her and admired her greatly. Mabel Vernon's personality is also vivid in memory.

Alice Paul, of course, nobody knew, she was always very remote. I have a slight resentment towards Alice Paul, because my mother would do anything that she told her she had to do for the suffrage movement. When my mother took that trip across the country in 1916, I think Pops--that is, Colonel Wood--felt that she shouldn't be subjected to such physical strain, lecturing from the back of a car and all of that, for three months going across the country.

But I don't remember the Fair in those terms, any involvement of my mother, I mean, and I only know from reading about the fact that my mother took that trip at that era. It was some years later, in February 1921, that I went East with my mother.

Riess: Do you remember your mother speaking at the [Warren K.] Billings trial?

Caldwell: Billings? I just remember he was in jail as a conscientious objector. I remember seeing him and being impressed with the fact that I was having dinner with somebody who had been in prison. I think later Billings became a lover--maybe even husband--of some socially prominent woman in San Francisco. I

remember that he was an attractive man, but that's not a very precise word.

Berkeley in 1916: House. Playmates. Parks

Caldwell: I have some more thoughts about Berkeley, the house there, and the fire. I was ten years old in 1916 when we moved, and we lived on LeRoy Avenue. There was a fire house right nearby, just a few doors away, and the firemen more or less brought up the neighborhood children. They were very interesting men, and they were very friendly, and they made us feel grown-up, because they asked us how to do algebra and things like that.

And if you didn't have the key to your house they'd get a ladder and put it to the third floor and go in the window and come down and open your front door. And they also knitted, and I'd never seen men knitting. They were just part of a secure factor in my childhood.

There was no electric refrigeration, people used ice boxes, and we would be so thrilled when the ice truck came by. While the ice man was delivering the ice, we would go and get the little chips that were in the inside of the ice wagon.

Many old Berkeley houses--how old is your house?

Riess: It's about 1920.

Caldwell: Well, then you must have a cooler. You know what a cooler is. This house [3 Vine Lane] was built in 1926, and it has a cooler. On the north side of the house there would be a cupboard with a screen actually on the outside, and that's where you'd keep things cool. That made a great impression on me.

And then I took piano lessons in the most beautiful Maybeck house. Maybeck was not well known at that time. He became very famous later. The house burned in the '23 fire but was reproduced identically, because the blueprints were in San Francisco. I used to walk down--it was only a block from where I lived--and it made a great impression on me. My teacher was a warm, kind woman, Alma Schmidt-Kennedy, rather large-busted, and friendly, and she had a beautiful studio, still to be seen because it was reproduced.

Riess: Where is that?

Caldwell: It's right on the corner of Buena Vista and Euclid, a beautiful place. She had two grand pianos, and she made every child come and wash their hands first before they could touch her pianos. She made everyone feel that he or she was just wanted and loved, and I looked forward to going there very, very much. I was not at all musical, except as an appreciator. It was caring of my father that he would spend the money on those lessons, and on getting my teeth straightened. Like my mother, I had a very narrow jaw. He showed his fatherly concern, culturally and physically.

In retrospect, I appreciate his having done those things very, very much, and didn't realize in my mature life I'd be going back to that same--in a sense that same building, even though it's a reproduction--to the house now owned by a man who's a jazz pianist, but who has classical programs as well. Anyway, Mrs. Kennedy was a great influence in my life.

The district, as far as schools were concerned, had fixed boundaries, so that all of my playmates went to a different school than I did, because my house was right on the dividing line. I had to walk many, many blocks over to Oxford School, Oxford Street, while my playmates went right down the hill to the Hillside School. And that was very, very hard for me not to be sharing those same experiences.

Riess: These are the playmates you would have fun in the afternoon with, at the firehouse?

Caldwell: Yes, that's true, exactly. I loved walking by the reservoir, which is still there on Euclid Avenue. At that time it was not enclosed. It later had a very ugly wooden roof put on it. Earlier it was like a beautiful lake, and the caretaker spent, as it seemed to me, all of his days in a rowboat. I thought when I grew up I wanted to be a caretaker of a reservoir and spend my days just rowing around in a boat.

Riess: Having lived on LeRoy, I'm sure that when you talk about Berkeley, memories of Berkeley, you have memories of the Temple of the Wings.

Caldwell: Oh, yes, I do. That was very funny, because we went to school with some of the Boynton children, and they were vegetarians. They were always trying to exchange their peanut butter sandwiches for our roast beef ones. [laughs] But I don't remember them at all, except this sandwich exchange idea.

Riess: You didn't go up there for dancing classes yourself?

Caldwell: No. I wasn't allowed to dance. I was never allowed to dance, and there were never any cards allowed in the house, so I don't know how to play bridge or anything about cards at all. And the one thing I would dearly love to do is to dance well, and I never got a chance. My husband and I used to dance some, and of course I went to dances as an adult, but I never felt at ease.

One of the things I remember very vividly about early Berkeley was that lovely little park, down at University and Shattuck, which has now got buildings on it. Lovely--there are lots of pictures of it. Trees, and grass, and that's where you took the train to go to the ferry boat to San Francisco. You either went Key Route or Southern Pacific. And you could go every twenty minutes, and it only took about forty, and it was marvelous. I remember, as so many hundreds of people still remember, the pleasure of the trip to San Francisco by boat, and train, and it was so fast. And so delightful!

Later on I was on the Berkeley Art Commission here, and aware of where we had parks and where we didn't, and how we treated our streets. So I think that--I consciously return to the memory of that lovely little park, and how outraged I was when, because Berkeley wanted more revenue from taxation, they replaced it with these horrible buildings.

Albert's Experiments

Riess: All the time you were with your father, Albert was always living there too?

Caldwell: Yes, he was there. He had the whole top floor of that three-story house. There were two bedrooms up there, and one was his laboratory, scientific laboratory, and the other his bedroom. And during the first world war--maybe I mentioned this--he had a radio, and he was not allowed to have an aerial outside, he was not allowed to have an aerial at all, so he erected one inside. But one day a policeman came and put an end to that. I'll never forget going to the door and seeing the policeman asking for my brother! Scared to death!

Riess: How did the policeman find out?

Caldwell: I'm not sure. It must have been because he was communicating with other radio fans.

He was very, very advanced in his scientific interest, whether it was chemistry, or mechanics. He worked in the summer--which was very unusual for students then--in order to earn money for his equipment, for his laboratory.

An Independent Child. Transportation

Riess: The train went out to the Bay, didn't it, to meet the ferry? I'm thinking of what we now think of as the Berkeley pier.

Caldwell: Oh, that was much later, many years later. No, we went down to Oakland by train, right to the edge of the water, and then got on the boat.

The Berkeley pier was much, much later, after I came here to live as an adult with my husband. My first job was at the Legion of Honor, and it only took fifteen minutes from the end of the Berkeley pier to Hyde Street in San Francisco. And then I just drove through the Presidio to the Legion of Honor. Really and truly, it took only thirty-five or forty minutes in all. But that was many years later.

In those earlier days there was a train down to Oakland, right to the edge of the water, as I said before, and there we got on the boat. You see, my memory of getting to San Francisco is much earlier, this other way. Of course, I was very young. I went with my brother. Then, of course, after he died I went alone, although I remember going alone when I was younger, before his death.

I remember on landing they had a rope they put in front of people, particularly the business people who couldn't wait to get off the boat and rush to their offices. They had a rope, and then they'd drop the rope, and you'd rush off onto the shore. Once--I couldn't have been more than seven--I was crossing alone, and my pants fell down to the ground just at the moment that they dropped the rope. [laughter] I was amazingly--looking back, I wouldn't have known the word "composed," but I remember I stepped out of them, stuck them in my pocket, and walked on. [laughs]

And I used to walk up from the ferry building oftentimes to my mother's home. I either took the cable car up to Pacific and Taylor, or I would walk. Sometimes right through Chinatown--of course, the Chinese are very, very protective of children. It was only when I was an adolescent and walked through the Italian

district and there were the whistles that I worried, but then I wasn't worried about attack, I was just embarrassed.

I must say one thing about crossing the Bay. I loved it, but there were times when the boat actually would get confused in the fog, and have a hard time finding the pier. I was a little apprehensive about that, but also I thought it was quite an adventure.

I did everything alone. I was so much alone and on my own. The only thing I didn't like about that was after I became old enough so that it wasn't necessary to have a housekeeper, there would be nobody home when I came home from school. That's why I became so fond of dogs. I had a dog, and I would go out walking all by myself up in the hills--which of course you would never dream to do now, it's too dangerous. But this was when I was in high school.

There was no housekeeper, but I can't remember doing any cooking. My father must have gotten the dinner. I was never brought up to be domestic. I made my bed, very badly, and that was all. Didn't do any cleaning, didn't do any cooking.

One time, later on--. I was still in high school. I was very much hoping that my father would remarry, and there was a woman he was attracted to. She was accustomed to perfection in the house and food. My mother and Pops--as I called Colonel Wood--also wished that my father would remarry, and they had their cook cook a dinner. By this time I must have been able to drive, and I drove my mother's car and brought over a meal that had been cooked by my mother's cook.

I didn't lie, but it was just assumed by this lovely lady that I had prepared this dinner, and I was such a well-brought-up young lady, and my father must be--[laughs]. I think that was kind of amusing, to think that my mother and stepfather's cook would have prepared this dinner for my father and his lady friend. And indeed they were married, later, after I left the house.

I also, from those days, remember going down the Vine Lane steps, down to Shattuck and Vine streets, to meet my father coming home on the train from San Francisco. When we first came to Berkeley he was still working at the YMCA in San Francisco, as an employment secretary, before he got himself established in the church in Berkeley. So I used to go down and meet him. There is a building on the corner of Vine and Shattuck with a sort of cupola on it that goes back to the last century; it's

still there. It was a meat market then; it's a produce market now.

I used to go down the Vine Lane steps, and I remember my father, as he passed the place in Vine Lane where I now live, explaining to me the use of the subjunctive. [laughter] I also didn't know that it was the first lane in Berkeley, first one of these pedestrian passageways from one street to another. Nor that I'd ever live there. But I became very fond of this north Berkeley area.

Riess: And all of these passageways were really designed to work with public transportation, weren't they?

Caldwell: Oh, yes. Since people didn't have cars then, universally, as they do now. Every member of a family now has a car. Unbelievable, to me. My father had a car, but he didn't use it except for recreation, and fund-raising for his church.

When I was ten my father and my brother and I bicycled all the way from Berkeley to Point Lobos. We went over the Santa Cruz mountains, but I can assure you we came home on the train with our bikes in the baggage car. We got to San Jose the first day, and that was fifty miles. But from then on, when we got to the Santa Cruz mountains, we walked our bikes. They didn't have gears in those days. Probably passed by what was later on the site of The Cats.

Riess: Well, isn't that a wonderful memory!

Caldwell: Yes, it was a wonderful memory, except it was so exhausting. We stopped overnight in the Santa Cruz mountains at some religious resort that my father knew about. The most beautiful moment was coming over the pass when we saw the ocean. Of course, it was a two-lane highway then.

I think Point Lobos and Yosemite were the greatest natural sights of my childhood, that I really recognized as beautiful. Just not "nice to be here, out in the open," but of great natural beauty.

Father and Daughter

Riess: Tell me more about your father.

Caldwell: My relationship with my father was always a very warm one, but I was terribly distressed, of course, about his anger, and he was angry most of the time. Not at me or my brother but at the disruption of his life. He was very, very strict with us about going to church and that kind of thing, but very loving, took us on all kinds of expeditions and so on. [phone rings]

Riess: In the summer of 1917 you went with your father to visit his family in Cincinnati. Do you have strong recollections of that trip?

Caldwell: Yes, I have. His mother and father had died, so only his sisters and brothers were living. I remember going to the house where my father's family--my father's father was very much interested in music, not as a musician but an appreciator. They had two pianos, and chamber music on one night a week.

My grandfather was at the time quite a noted lithographer. He's probably not of any note now, but he is listed in the history of American lithography. I know more about my grandparents through my mother's stories about them. My mother liked his mother and father. In any case, I didn't meet my grandparents at all. I just remember it was a large house, and I hated the heat--the hot summer.

I felt sorry for my father. When we were too young, we couldn't put it in those words, but he was a lonely man, and we were all he had. And we didn't even phrase it that way, but we sensed it. I always went to church with my father--well, he required that.

What I really resented as a child, living up there on LeRoy Avenue, was on Wednesday nights I was forced to go to prayer meeting, and in the neighborhood my young friends--that's another reason I was cut off from my peers--they were at one another's houses dancing. And I had to go to prayer meeting. This I resented.

Riess: They were dancing on Wednesday nights?

Caldwell: In their homes, yes, and it happened to be Wednesday, prayer-meeting night. They just agreed on that. It was like a little club.

Social Isolation and Self-Consciousness

Caldwell: I felt very socially isolated from my contemporaries because of these circumstances. It was very hard for me to feel a part of my age group. On the weekends, we went to San Francisco. Wednesday night I had to go to prayer meeting.

And I also felt very self-conscious about my clothes. I wasn't badly dressed, but nobody kind of oversaw that, and I have a self-consciousness about whether I'm properly dressed for a social occasion, to this day. I associate with people in Pacific Heights in San Francisco in connection with the Asian Art Museum, and I'm always so aware of what they're wearing, in a ridiculous way, because I don't really spend much time thinking about those things ordinarily.

There were all kinds of things. For example, I remember we had the domestic science circle classes in junior high school, and the other girls' mothers had taught them how to sew and cook, and I knew nothing. My father had a housekeeper or a relative who lived in and took charge.

I knew nothing about cooking or sewing, and I remember working way into the night, so late that my father insisted I had to go to bed, making a buttonhole, and I pricked my finger at the last. And even though one could wash out the blood with cold water, I didn't know things like that. So all I got was a bawling-out in front of the whole class about having turned in my buttonhole with a little blood stain on it. And I hated the domestic science teacher from then on.

Riess: Were you a good student?

Caldwell: Yes, I was a good student. Except in arithmetic, in mathematics. Even as a little girl, I was slow at any kind of arithmetic. Worst in the class, probably. It was only recently that I understood what algebra is about. I got a terrible grade in algebra. But otherwise, I learned to read very quickly. After all, I came from a literary family, and I was read to from the earliest I can remember.

Riess: And you thought of reading as a wonderful thing to be doing.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. And Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit--to this day I think it's a fine piece of literature. [laughs] I thought I had learned to read when I was four, because I memorized that book, and told my uncle, my mother's only brother, that I could read.

But I had it upside down. And I really seriously thought I was reading it.

Years later, when I was with Jim Caldwell in the lake country in England, we visited Beatrix Potter's estate, which had been given to the National Trust, to the government. I was so excited, and the custodian motioned to me personally and took me in another room and said, "We've never had anybody here so devoted to Beatrix Potter. I have two pictures of her left, and you may have one." I have to this day this picture of Beatrix with her dog. Loving dogs, I chose that.

Riess: Did your father have friends among the faculty people at Berkeley?

Caldwell: No, he didn't know very many--he may have known, but you see, I didn't have any social life to speak of in Berkeley. Either adult, or of my own generation. I was always on weekends over in San Francisco. My father had some very nice friends through his church, but I don't remember very much contact with the University, although he may have had.

I remember he was a great environmentalist, and how upset he was at putting the [UC Berkeley] stadium where it was, and cutting down the trees. I remember his rage as we stood there and watched these beautiful trees being cut down, and the inappropriateness of putting it there and so on.

And he would take us on trips to Yosemite where we would camp, and down to Point Lobos, Carmel. He was always taking us out on expeditions into nature, and my love of nature comes from my father. We had very nice outings together. But always God was brought into it. We had to pray.

Riess: Was your father an activist as an environmentalist?

Caldwell: I don't know about that. I don't think people were organized activists, so to speak, so much in those days. And of course, then as now, the power of the university is so strong that protests against any plans they have are just almost--just talking to the wind.

Riess: No "power of the pulpit?"

Caldwell: [laughs] Oh, no, no. He was never a famous clergyman at all. He always had a small church, very modest. Very modest.

He came from a very--my mother talks about it--very Bohemian, fun-loving, beer-drinking, music-loving German family. He was considered sort of a maverick. [laughs]

Riess: Do you think that behind the scenes your mother was in touch with your father and his planning for your upbringing?

Caldwell: No, not at all. She was not in touch with him at all. She didn't want to have anything to do with him. And she just had nothing to do with where we were or how we were educated or anything, nothing, at that time. Not until I went to college.

Riess: She must have had a great faith in your father.

Caldwell: I think she was so absorbed in her suffrage work and in Colonel Wood--she knew we were safe, she knew we were protected and safe in my father's care. But I don't really think it concerned her very much. This, in looking back--when I say this, I don't say this with any resentment. I'm just trying to be realistic about her state of mind. Her world did not include us as focal parts of her life.

Uniqueness of Being a Child of a Suffrage Leader

Riess: Have you known children of other suffrage leaders who had a parallel experience?

Caldwell: Oh, heavens, they didn't have children! I remember--I've forgotten who it was now--some woman in my mother's web who had a child, and she said, "What can I do with the child?" My idea as a girl was that having a child, for an intelligent woman, was just a terrible burden, psychologically speaking. All these women, wringing their hands about "what to do with the child!"

Riess: So at least you've read of parallel experiences.

Caldwell: Not really, no.

Riess: But you know about this hand-wringing.

Caldwell: Yes, but I had no contemporaries who had a situation like mine.

Riess: Once Sara and the Colonel were living together, were you teased or tortured about that?

Caldwell: Silence when I'd come in the room, because they were gossiping. Here in Berkeley particularly. Not in San Francisco, because of course they were very much sought-after and venerated there. In Berkeley I would come in the room and know that the sudden ceasing of the conversation was because they were gossiping. When I was older I was more amused than dismayed by this.

Riess: Are you talking about a peer group or parents of your friends?

Caldwell: These were the adults. I don't ever remember any awareness that people my own age had any thoughts about my mother and Colonel Wood. They either didn't know about it, or they were indifferent. I think they just didn't know. No, it was always adults that were gossipy.

Riess: So school was a refuge, school was a neutral place.

Caldwell: I had a good time at school until my brother's death, and that just changed my whole attitude, I think, my whole mood of carefree-ness and feeling my own age.

But this disapproval--the only time I was discriminated against was not being accepted in the Town and Gown Club here in Berkeley. That was when I was twenty-five and came back as a young wife with my husband. One woman cast the vote against me, black-balled me because of my mother. "Not the daughter of that woman," she said.

And the joke was that later on, in '39 and '40 when I had charge of all the lectures at the fair on Treasure Island, I was kind of a public figure. And they wanted me to come to lecture there, and I turned them down. With great glee. Later my husband, who read poetry very eloquently, was asked, and he also turned them down. No, I've gone to lots of affairs there, invited by friends, musical events or something, but I had never any idea that I ever wanted to belong to it. That was probably a petty vindictiveness.

Sara's First Address in San Francisco

Riess: Before Sara and your stepfather were living together in San Francisco, she had an apartment of her own?

Caldwell: She lived on Taylor Street, just up the street from the later Broadway house, for a long time, 1601 Taylor Street, the place

she lived for years, long before Pops came down to live permanently in California.

It was an old house which survived the earthquake and fire. It was half of a house; the people who owned it had had a dispute, and they just cut the house in two and took one of the halves away. Anyway, it had an upstairs apartment, and she lived there for a long time. That's where my brother and I used to go and see her when we came over. Of course, my brother never knew the Broadway house.

But we used to go to see her there, and on those occasions she would make us an apple pie. The two times I ever remember my mother cooking were when she fixed the Triscuits in Portland and when she baked an apple pie on Russian Hill.

Riess: When you visited her, would you go to the theater or do things?

Caldwell: No, we didn't. It's interesting, we didn't do anything. We never went away from the house as I can remember. We might have gone to a movie, but I don't remember that. We were just glad to see her at home. We didn't need any entertainment other than my mother. And I remember, those were very precious hours with her. Nowadays, children have so much in their lives, but we never even thought in terms of needing entertainment, other than my mother; she was enough in herself.

Riess: And you would be there for the day, not for overnight?

Caldwell: No, we would stay overnight. We would go on Friday, but my father required us to be back for church on Sunday, so we went back on Saturday late afternoon, and we were resentful of the fact that we were required to come back for church.

Riess: Did you have to share her time with any friends?

Caldwell: Oh, yes. Well, not so much in the Taylor Street house. It was later on, when they moved into the Broadway house, and there was so much entertainment, always people there. Of course, Pops did come down to the Taylor Street house, too, from time to time. That's when I really got over my resentment of him and became fond of him.

I can remember the artist, [Beniamino] Bufano. I can't quite remember how it was that Pops began to be interested in Bufano, but I remember he stayed at the house one time, at the Taylor Street house. But Pops just came down occasionally to see Mother then in that house, and then later on bought the large house on the corner.

Riess: And did you have feelings of shame or of wanting to hide these visits from your friends?

Caldwell: Oh, no. On the contrary, everybody knew it anyway. There was nothing to hide; it was out in the open. No, I had great pride in her. I felt no shame whatsoever. I felt anxiety for my mother sometimes, but no shame. No, I thought they were marvelous. And of course, it was very interesting to know their friends, and I became fonder and fonder of Colonel Wood. He was loving and kind, and he treated me like his own daughter.

Riess: Berkeley I think of as a sophisticated and forgiving community.

Caldwell: Not then, not the Baptist Church world I lived in here.



Albert Ehrgott with his children Albert, Jr., and Katherine, circa 1915.

II FAMILY TRAGEDY

The Accident, 1918, and Aftermath

Caldwell: Would you like me to tell about the accident?

Riess: Yes. I know we are coming up to that point in your life history. And we've been careful not to repeat what you wrote in your "Afterword" to Sara's oral history, but I think we should include your account of the accident that resulted in your brother's death, and that was so traumatic for your mother and you.

Caldwell: All right. My brother and I were never supposed to see Colonel Wood. My father referred to him as "that man." And one of the hardest things about it for me was to have to tell lies. Mother couldn't very well say, "Erskine, dear, the children are coming for the weekend, will you please go stay with your daughter Lisa out in Lake Street." Anyway, I did see him, and I had to pretend I did not. And it's very important to know that, because of the terrible anguish, double anguish, for my father, because of the circumstances of the automobile accident which occurred later. So we used to try to think up all kinds of ways of going to see my mother when my father wasn't home.

In any case, my mother had readily acceded to my stepfather's request that she learn how to drive a car. She was not mechanically-minded at all. But to him, everybody drove a car by this time, you see, and it was nothing--it's like typing on the typewriter. Everybody could learn it. So she took lessons and learned it. But she never really liked it.

We went off on a picnic in October of 1918. It was a holiday, Columbus Day, so my brother, who was the president of his high school, a senior, very much loved, he could go too, and so could I.

We went over in the car--remember there were no bridges then, just an auto ferry--to Marin County, and we had a picnic. After that we looked at the schedule and thought it was time to go back to get a ferry boat back to San Francisco. But my brother said, "Oh, I'd like to show you a place I love hiking with my friends," because he had friends in Marin County. So instead of taking that next ferry, we made a detour. This is all so memorable, because of the terrible events that followed.

We went up a hill outside of Kentfield called White's Hill. It was getting quite steep. There seemed no place to turn around, and we thought we should certainly get back for the next auto ferry. So my mother started to make a U-turn on this very steep hill, and all of a sudden--I think part of the bank on the steep side was a little loamy, rather soft--all of a sudden the car started, perhaps at ten miles an hour or less, to just creep over towards the edge.

I remember Pops shouting, "Sara, put on the brake!" Then the next thing I knew we were slowly, so slowly it was like a slow-motion movie, like when in the Olympics now they replay somebody diving and slow down the motion, it was just like that, we rolled over and over and over slowly to the bottom of this, I guess about forty-foot--I'm just guessing at the height of it--canyon.

My mother and my brother and I were all trapped under the car. I was sort of dazed by all this, you know, and I was trapped by my arm. I wasn't hurt in any way, but I was trapped. I could see that Pops was the only one thrown free of the car, and that his nose was broken. Blood was pouring down his face. And of course, he was very old--. He started up the hill; he said, "I'll go get help."

I wondered then, though I was only twelve, whether he would make it physically. He looked in such bad shape. Then I realized my brother was making--I can't exactly say groaning noises--my mother knew he was dying, I didn't. As I was told later, the engine of the car crushed his chest.

My mother and I were both trapped. She says in her oral history that I was hysterical. I wasn't hysterical at all; I was frightened. I said to her, "Do you think we're going to die?" I was so grateful to her that she didn't say, "Oh, no, of course not." She said, "Darling, I don't know." And I was very grateful for her to say it.

Riess: Why were you grateful?

Caldwell: Because I knew it was realistic. I was old enough to know that we might die. So if she had said, "Of course we won't," I would have known that wasn't necessarily true.

Then she and I shouted for help. But in those days people shifted gears, which made a great noise if you were on a steep hill. So to shout to try to call for help was useless, because that was just the point where the noise of their car would have drowned out our cries.

And after what seemed an interminable time, all of a sudden some people came. Pops had found a group of high school students who were on a hike from the Tamalpais High School. They came and they lifted the car. I was so terrified of being trapped. But I didn't express my terror. My mother, in the oral history, seems to think I was hysterical, but I was not. I'll never forget my relief at being released.

Of course, I had no idea that my brother was seriously hurt. Mother did, but I had no idea. And that her left leg was almost severed. It was saved for her by an army surgeon who during the war had learned how to do grafting and saved her leg. But I knew nothing about her being seriously injured or my brother being dead.

So he died then and there, and was not taken to a hospital.

They took us to the Kentfield Hospital, and Mother and Pops were each put in separate rooms to be taken care of. I had absolutely no one to turn to, but no one. I went in to see my mother, and she said, "Don't speak to me." She was in such anguish. So that was a rejection of--. I can feel the coldness to this day in my heart. But I also realized, because by this time I knew my brother had died, what anguish she was in.

Then my father, my own father, who was in a distant town when this happened, raising money for his church, he came, and of course you can imagine! We were never supposed to see "that man," and these terrible consequences of this particular encounter.

He took me back to Berkeley, and I don't remember my--this is where I really blank out because of the trauma of all of this. I don't remember anything more about what happened except the incident that I told you about disguising myself to try to visit my mother, because I hadn't seen her for such a long time since that accident, and knew she was in this house in Kentfield. [see following]

Why my mother said in her oral history, "Albert's death had little effect on Kay, she never mentions it," I cannot understand. My God! I have a very dear friend, Elizabeth Elkus, who thinks that the hardest thing that happened to me in my childhood was losing my brother. He was such a strong support and delightful companion. I relied on him. He just meant everything to me. And we both were, had to be, mature beyond our years.

Riess: Had Albert helped you understand what was happening?

Caldwell: No. I always understood that my mother--I never ever, for all that Mother mentioned so often that my brother understood her love for Colonel Wood, I never questioned the fact that it was right for her to leave my father. Never. I never thought, "Oh, why didn't she stay?" or anything like that. Never. I just accepted it.

But Albert, because of the circumstances of the divorce and our loving our mother and always wanting to somehow or other get to see her, we had this great bond, too, you see. And conspiratorial often, because of my father's prohibition of our seeing Colonel Wood.

Riess: I'm struck by how psychologically out of touch your mother was. There's no inkling of empathy.

Caldwell: No. And she reminded me constantly that I resembled my father, so I was a more painful association for her. I never could quite figure out what she meant by that, but anyhow, that's what she used to say.

Riess: Did your father institute any legal action?

Caldwell: Do you mean subsequent to this accident? No. He did earlier on; he used to threaten to have Pops arrested for bigamy. And he put detectives on the house when she was living on Taylor Street in San Francisco. But nothing ever came of that.

Riess: You say that he, the Colonel, Pops, was so old. He always seemed so old?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, he always seemed to me like a very old man. After all, he was fifty-eight [CESW born 1852] when she first met him, so for a child, for a young person--I mean, not even a child, but even when I was much older I thought he was a very old man.

Riess: Did you have a hard time imagining this as a passionate relationship?

Caldwell: An interesting question--I just accepted it as it was. I think maybe it did cross my mind from time to time, but they were so fond of one another, it was so evident that there was such a deep love and rapport, that I just accepted it the way it was. I knew that my mother was very attractive to men wherever she went.

And you see, my own father was twenty years older than she, and Colonel Wood was thirty years older, or practically so. But my father didn't seem old the way Pops did. He never seemed like an old man to me at all.

Painful Memories. Visits

Caldwell: The real binding of my loving relationship with my stepfather happened later, at the time of my mother's nervous breakdown, and the aftermath of her care in the house on Russian Hill.¹ I didn't go into much detail about that in the "Afterword" to my mother's oral history, the terrible time, turning that house into a hospital. The details of her nervous breakdown were just appalling, physically. And the arrangements of the house, making it almost like a prison, her room.

Riess: Could you feel that coming on, the nervous breakdown?

Caldwell: I was too--how old was I?--I was about thirteen. I didn't know enough about it, but of course, she was not herself, that's the thing. It was about a year after my brother's death, and she was driving, you see, when he was killed, and this made her suicidal. Didn't want to live any more.

Riess: She had recovered from the physical effects of it?

¹ There was no breakdown in 1918, after my brother's death. Obviously depression. I would suggest we make a distinction between a depression and a nervous breakdown. Certainly she was depressed, but she did not have a transformation of personality or an inability to control her life. A breakdown did not occur until Los Gatos. That had to be after the acquisition of Los Gatos. When we would go there weekends, because we only went there weekends, we would live in a little shack that had been on the property, awaiting the completion of the house. Although for a date, to save my life, I can't figure out exactly when they acquired that property at Los Gatos. [KC]

Caldwell: Yes, she had, but she became psychologically utterly disturbed. She didn't have any signs of that at that time, right after the accident. It just came on slowly.

Riess: Right after the accident they were in Kentfield?

Caldwell: Yes, I think she describes in her oral history that her leg was almost severed in the accident, and an army surgeon who had new techniques of bone healing saved it from amputation. So they stayed in Kentfield quite a while for that reason, because she was convalescing from this. And I was forbidden to go to see her, because my father forbade us ever to see Colonel Wood.

This is an amusing thing: I missed her very much--I was only twelve. My father was out of town, and I went up to the attic here in Berkeley, and I got a little old-fashioned raincoat with a hood attached to it, Little Red Riding Hood or something like that. And I got a doll that had yellow hair--. I wanted to disguise myself because I had once had the terrible experience of somebody's saying to my father, "Oh, I saw your daughter and the most interesting-looking man having lunch, with long hair and a beard," and my father knew I had seen Colonel Wood, and there had been a very great to-do about that.

I was determined to go over by myself from Berkeley to Kentfield, and that involved many pieces of transportation. And remember, there were no bridges, no people driving you in cars. So anyway, I got the doll with the yellow hair, and I took it off, and I put this hood around my face and put the yellow hair on my forehead and on either side of my face. I took a cane, and limped, and I thought if anybody saw me, they wouldn't know who I was.

Of course-- [phone rings] oh, I'm so sorry. I'll get my portable phone.

Riess: Yes. Let's not stop that story. So there you were--.

Caldwell: Well, getting to San Anselmo was quite a problem because, of course, there were nothing but ferries across the Bay, so I had to go take a train down to the Bay, and then the ferry boat to San Francisco. Then I had to take a ferry boat to Sausalito, and then I got onto a railroad train, and got off at Kentfield.

I had never gone there before by myself, and so I had some difficulty--and it was pouring rain, that was the reason for the raincoat. Finally, I somehow or other managed to find the house. And you must remember that though I was only twelve,

that nobody in my life shepherded me around anywhere. I was entirely on my own.

I opened the door and Colonel Wood said, "Kay, darling!" And I burst into tears and said, "Oh, you recognized me!" Because I thought my disguise was so perfect. By this time, of course, the rain had washed the yellow hair away, it was sort of sticking to my face, and not connected to my head at all.

Riess: It's a desperate story, isn't it.

Caldwell: Yes, it really was. Anyway, that was a memorable event. A very triumphant one that I got there and had a chance to see my mother. And I didn't see her for a long time after that because of the prohibition on seeing Colonel Wood.

Another time a little later, a long time went by, and they had rented a house nearby, in Marin County. I wanted to see my mother. So my father said he would take me, but it must be clear that Colonel Wood would not be in sight. My mother's older sister, Mary Parton, who lived in San Francisco, had come over to Kentfield to be of use. And she mixed up the date, and as we--I think I told this in the oral history--as we approached the house there was my mother reclining on a chaise, and my stepfather's arm around her.

You can imagine the effect on my father. We retreated, and my father shouted all the way back down the canyon, "You killed your son, you killed your son." And I remember hating my father at that moment for saying that. I felt that was a terrible thing for him to say.

But this emphasizes the difficulty I had in seeing my mother, on account of this prohibition. My brother and I were always contriving ways of seeing my mother without my father knowing about it.

Riess: What kind of communication did you have other than that? Telephone calls or letters?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, my mother called. But then I usually dissolved in tears, and so my father was very, very dismayed at the thought of too many telephone calls. He couldn't stop my mother from calling, but he felt--understandably--that this was upsetting to me. Yes, she called every so often.

Riess: How did your father help you stand the pain of all of this?

Caldwell: Well, he felt that the influence of Colonel Wood was the most dreadful thing that could happen to us. See, he had no belief that that relationship would last. Colonel Wood had had so many affairs with so many women, and he thought this was just another affair. I was too young then to understand that this was his view, but as I grew older and look back on it, I see that was his idea.

And also, you see, Colonel Wood was an outspoken atheist, and my father after all was a clergyman. He had told me when I was twelve that my mother would go to Hell. I then and there rejected Christianity, because I decided I'd rather go to Hell with her. So for me the church was no longer of any meaning whatsoever. I didn't want to hurt my father's feelings, and of course, I tried very hard not to let him know what my views were on that subject.

Riess: When you would be together for those brief periods, was your mother all mother and trying to make up?

Caldwell: Not really. Later on, and this is going forward in time for me, to seventeen, the house in San Francisco was such a center of cultural life, whether writers or artists or musicians, that they were always entertaining. They had a live-in Chinese cook, and whether it was breakfast, lunch, or dinner, there was always somebody there. And then I remember wishing that my mother would just reserve time for me, but there were all these distractions.

She was so attractive to people. I felt she didn't belong quite to me. I found that difficult sometimes to take, and I often resented her guests, however nice they might be. However, she tried from time to time to compensate for this. I remember once she arranged a party when I was a teenager. I was so astonished. But that was one event.

Her focus was on her work, on the Women's Party, and of course first of all on Colonel Wood. He was the center of her life. I accepted that, and I never felt resentful. Oh, in the beginning I felt very resentful of Colonel Wood, but in the course of time I came to love him so much that I just accepted that this was her--never questioned that it was the right thing for her to do, to have left my brother and me to my father. I have friends my own age who are very censorious of my mother giving up her children, but I never felt that she had done the wrong thing.

My mother never really realized--she always talked about how much my brother accepted this--. I don't think she ever

realized how completely "right" it seemed--[laughs] you can't do that in quotation marks--but I always just accepted this was the way it was. I never questioned at all that she should have left my father.

She was miserably unhappy, according to her own [testimony]. I didn't know they were unhappy. She wasn't home very much, even when I was a child in Portland, Oregon. I always think of her as leaving in the morning. And somehow or other, for all that my father's income was so small as a clergyman, we always had some kind of household help.

Riess: Were there mother figures, any other mother figures that came into your life?

Caldwell: None at all. I felt completely on my own.

I've always thought that one of the reasons that my marriage meant so much to me, aside from being very fond of my husband, is that it gave me a sense of security and continuity. So that his [Jim Caldwell's] death at sixty-five, when I was fifty-nine, was a double blow, because again I was all alone, on my own, as I had been as an adolescent, as I had been all of my childhood and adolescence. There was nobody there.

Riess: You sound admirably independent, but that's a very poignant account.

Caldwell: This is a very personal thing, but I know you want honesty. You asked about the motherliness. I remember when I menstruated, it happened to be on a Friday, at Berkeley High School, and I went on over to San Francisco and expected this great event to be--

Riess: Heralded.

Caldwell: --and she didn't have time really. Somebody was around, and of course I wouldn't have spoken of it in the presence of a stranger. But I didn't feel it was made enough of. [laughter]

When my own daughter had this event, we were traveling--I think we were in New Mexico--and we had dinner, just my husband and my son and my daughter, and we got some wine, and we toasted her. We made a great thing of it, as I would have wished it had been done for me. But I didn't resent that it wasn't--. I felt a little hurt, but it didn't diminish my--I didn't accuse her.

Sara's Breakdown

Riess: For all of the intellectually sophisticated people you were around, were any of them psychologically aware? In other words, did your mother know any Freudians, or Jungians?

Caldwell: Oh, no, absolutely--. She had nothing to do with psychoanalysis, not any.

And at the time of her nervous breakdown, Colonel Wood brought down from Napa a person they called then an alienist? Do you know that word?

Riess: Yes.

Caldwell: And of course, socially it was something you didn't talk about if somebody in the family had a breakdown; it was just not mentioned. It was not accepted as something that you could possibly share with other people.

She [the alienist] was a lovely woman, wonderful person. The reason I have such vivid memories of her, though I do not remember her name, was because she turned to me when I said to her, "Do you think my mother will ever recover?" She gave me a beautiful smile and said, "Yes, she will, in a maximum of two years."

Riess: That was a wonderful gift to give you.

Caldwell: It really was, yes.

But she [my mother] really had to be sequestered, you see, in a room for that length of time, and nobody could enter the room, because of her suicidal impulses. No one could enter the room with anything with which she might harm herself. So it was very, very difficult, and that's when my--I didn't go into much detail about her care, but that's the time that my stepfather and I became so close, because we both loved her so much.

Riess: But for the first few years after the accident things seemed to be okay.

Caldwell: Yes.

Riess: Why did it take so long to manifest itself, the nervous breakdown?

Caldwell: I think she just brooded over it [my brother's death]. They would go down to Los Gatos--this was before they built The Cats, and they had a temporary place pending the completion of the house, a small shack that had been on the property when they bought it.

My stepfather had made these wonderful cement tables and benches, and they were all over the place, and my mother would go off every day, and there was one where she would go presumably to be writing poetry. But we discovered she had a Ouija board, and she hoped she was communicating with my brother. She did nothing but this, day in and day out. We didn't know that for a long time, we thought she was writing poetry.

Then she got into a kind of trance, and she would go and stand at night in her nightgown, staring at the moon. We realized that she was sick, so we took her to San Francisco, and then arranged the house so that she could be--that she was perfectly safe from destroying herself. I don't know whether all of these details, whether you want to edit these out or not, but--.

First we took her to a place--. Oh, yes, she tried to hurl herself out of the car on the ride from Los Gatos to San Francisco. I knelt on the back of the car and threw my body across her so she couldn't leap out of the car. And when we got there we didn't know what to do with her, because you see, she might jump out of the window or something. So we had to take her to a perfectly awful place. We were just groping in the dark for a place to put her, temporarily, for her safety. We couldn't handle it at home.

Riess: You took her to a hospital?

Caldwell: Yes. Well, it was a private place that took care of mentally disturbed people, the best we could do, and very quickly. Then Colonel Wood hired somebody to put bars on the windows of the bedroom in the house on Broadway and Taylor in San Francisco, and that room was her room then for about two years. Then we had a nurse, of course, around the clock. See, she wanted to destroy herself, that was her fixation. Little by little, she recovered.

That room she was in happened to have been my room, by the way, a beautiful one with a balcony. At that time I wasn't yet living there [not until September 1923], I just was going over on weekends, my court-allotted time, there or Los Gatos. I

think later, when her teeth were pulled, that was after I was living there. But I'm not absolutely sure of that.

Riess: Were there any medications used in the treatment?

Caldwell: I'm sure there must have been, but I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know a thing about that. I just know that this wonderful alienist came every so often, and I looked forward to that.

We would go in to see her, but she was fixed so on her guilt. She was not worthy to live, that idea, you see.

Riess: She would speak with you?

Caldwell: Yes, but not really herself, just in such mental anguish. I know they gave her hot baths to relax, I remember that. That's the only treatment I remember. It made a great impression on me, that she would recline for a long time in a hot tub, with a nurse in attendance of course.

Presence and Influence of Charles Erskine Scott Wood

Riess: Colonel Wood sounds very practical. I mean, he was able to handle all of this.

Caldwell: He dealt with each situation, like where to put her temporarily when we couldn't handle her at home. He solved problems as we went along. Everything was all right when he was around, because he was so absolutely unshakable, and he was never upset, except when she was dangerously ill.

The only time I ever saw him upset with my mother was once when the doctor told her she mustn't drink coffee because of her colitis, and she sneaked around and tried to drink it when he wasn't looking. That was the only time I ever saw him just outraged that she wouldn't cooperate for the sake of her health.

The thing that really upset him was social injustice. He was a calm, solid, firm and a wonderful father figure, just a marvelously comforting kind of person. There was nothing he couldn't make you feel comforted about.

Riess: And this was the time that the two of you drew very close together.

Caldwell: Yes, that's right. Long before that I'd loved him and enjoyed seeing him, but this was on an adult level for me, you see. We were adults together, as well as stepfather and stepdaughter.

Riess: During the period of time when Sara was recovering, were there visitors?

Caldwell: Occasionally she did have, somebody very close. But I can't remember who came. They had to be almost examined. Almost anything, even a little something, a person can turn into their wrists. I can't remember who came. It was such a traumatic thing to go in to see her, because she was so unlike her usual self. Only fixed on this one idea of self-destruction, and her guilt--wicked, wicked woman thing.

I think probably--I don't know this--but I think probably for all her clarity of purpose in leaving my father because of her love of Colonel Wood, she probably had some lingering sense of guilt about leaving my brother and me. And I think that also the times that she didn't come back at Christmas because of the Women's Party--that might have entered into it, along with that terrible, terrible trauma of losing her son. I don't know. I'm just guessing there. Because, of course, the real cause of her breakdown was his death, and the fact that she was really the cause of it.

Riess: You wrote about that in the "Afterword". Was that hard for you to write about that?

Caldwell: Not by that time. The way I had dealt with that frightful experience, a traumatic crucial experience in my life, was to talk about it, and this I did know. A psychiatrist said it was important, that you mustn't bury these things. So I compulsively talk about it to somebody who becomes a friend, a new friend. Eventually it gets around to that auto accident. I still know how I felt trapped under that car. Of course, I didn't know my brother was dying. My mother did. I had no idea that he was in peril.

Riess: The psychiatrist who said the most healing thing was to talk about the trauma, who was that?

Caldwell: That I learned from Helen Meiklejohn. She had had an experience in a railroad train where it had gone off the tracks and over a river at night, and she had to be rescued along with all of them. She was terribly funny. She said, "I was carried by an unknown, but very handsome, man in my nightie." [laughter] But she couldn't sleep at night remembering all this peril, and a psychiatrist told her, "You must recount this over and over and

over." That was it. I hadn't thought of that until now; it was Helen Meiklejohn who told me that.

Riess: Was Sara's recovery complete, or did you feel uneasy?

Caldwell: No, it seemed quite complete. It was almost like waking from a trance, you know, a fairy-tale kind of thing. She seemed quite herself.

Riess: Then did it become something that was never spoken of?

Caldwell: Yes, we didn't talk about it. I don't think it was really resolved to bury it; it's that we were so glad, and we just went on from there.

Kay's Life on Hold

Riess: How did your life work for those two years?

Caldwell: After my mother recovered--the doctor had said she would not recover for two years, but she recovered more quickly--we went abroad. I guess that must have been the first part of '24.

Meanwhile, always wanting to make use of time in as intellectually profitable a way as possible, while I was living in San Francisco I enrolled in a private school in Berkeley--I can't remember the name of it--down on Telegraph Avenue. It was quite famous then. And I studied French and history. I couldn't possibly just fritter away my time!

Riess: And this was your idea?

Caldwell: It was my idea. And my stepfather financed it. I commuted from San Francisco to Berkeley, the other way around, for a few months pending our going to Europe.

Then we went to Europe, I think in January of '24. And there again Colonel Wood and I became very close, because while my mother liked art, she wasn't attracted to it as strongly as I was. And he just loved to go to galleries, and we did this a lot together.

There's this one little thing that has to do with Berkeley, about going to Europe. My mother hated ocean travel. She didn't even want to cross the English Channel by boat, though it doesn't take very long. So we went by air from Paris to London,

and it was unbelievable, almost unheard of at that time to go by air. So it was written up in the Berkeley paper, that some Berkeley citizen had taken this perilous flight from Paris to London.

Riess: Was it perilous?

Caldwell: Well, I developed a severe claustrophobia after the auto accident, because I was trapped, but somehow or other, airplanes had never bothered me. You'd think one would have claustrophobia in the airplane, but I did not have it. I thought it was simply marvelous. Except that the roar in your ears stayed for two days. There was no protection from the noise.

I knew enough about art at that time to think everything looked like the patterns of Cezanne, if you looked below.

Riess: But first you had the ocean crossing.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. Poor Mother, she was sick the whole time. And I never was. My stepfather told me how to handle the motion of the boat by adjusting your stance, and that worked beautifully.

Riess: Was there anything memorable about the trip across the country to board the ship? Did they stop and visit people along the way?

Caldwell: No. We simply went to New York, and then we took a Mediterranean boat and went directly and got off at Naples, and went to Sorrento.

III ENTERING THE ADULT WORLD

Women's Party Meeting. Washington, 1921. Via Chicago

Riess: Tell me about the preparations for and the trip to Washington, and in fact, your mother's decision to take you.

Caldwell: Oh, yes, and I was only fifteen. That's rather interesting. You see, the railroad trains were perfectly wonderful at that time, and I'll never forget the big send-off at the Oakland Pier where you'd get the train. We had a compartment, and Mrs. Kent was also on that train. And probably because of Colonel Wood's thoughtfulness and generosity, we had great baskets of fruit and flowers, and it was all very exciting.

We stopped over first in Chicago, and my mother had very dear friends in Chicago. I immediately went on my own, walked to the Art Institute of Chicago. Because of Colonel Wood--this was before we went abroad--because of him, and the beautiful pictures in the house on Broadway in San Francisco, I had loved to look at paintings.

Everyone was so astonished that I had just taken off and walked from the hotel by myself to the Art Institute. I remember that. It seemed to me a perfectly normal thing to do. I just wanted to go. I was very independent. I thought nothing of finding my way around the city by myself, because I had to do that in the San Francisco Bay Area, after all.

Riess: You didn't need to ask your mother's permission, because you hadn't been asking it for years.

Caldwell: That's right. Oh, there wasn't a matter of any deception anyhow. I mean, I just--yes, I wasn't used to parental guidance, so to speak. Anyway, that's a memorable experience for me, going to the museum there by myself.

Riess: When you were in Chicago were you staying with friends?

Caldwell: No, we stayed at a hotel. I've got it written down somewhere where we stayed. It was walking distance easily from the Art Institute, and I always loved the Impressionists--they have such a wonderful collection there. (From my stepfather I had learned to look at paintings as recreations of reality by talented individual artists.)

Riess: Did Sara visit Hull House when you were in Chicago?

Caldwell: No. I don't remember anything but the museum and these wonderful people named Johannsen. The man was a great labor leader, and his wife a marvelous person, warm and loving. Their son Homer was a friend of my brother, and his age, and supposedly I should have liked him enough to really care about him, but I never did care about him any more than as a friend. Later on, when I was at the University of Wisconsin for two years, I invited him up to a sorority dance, but I never had any romantic feelings about him at all.

Then we went on to Washington, and we stayed at the Women's Party headquarters. This event--the reason we were in Washington was for a convention of the National Women's Party. I remember it was a lovely house, converted into the purposes of the Women's Party. I was most impressed by two things: the women themselves, so focused on what they were doing, and the men, charming men, that supported them. One of them brought me some Parisian perfume from Paris, Caron. I'll never forget.

I was only a girl, but I was treated like a charming young woman, you see, there. And then I lobbied, and the New York Times carried my picture as the youngest lobbyist for the Women's Party. I have that picture somewhere, by the way.

Riess: The suffrage amendment had passed in November 1920. Your lobbying, what was it?

Caldwell: I don't remember, I just walked around and knocked on doors. There were always "rights" to be endorsed. I'm amazed to think of my confidence then. Now I could no more do anything like that!

Riess: You knocked on doors in the halls of Congress?

Caldwell: Yes.

Riess: What was your line?

Caldwell: I don't remember that. I just remember doing this.



MISS
KATHERINE
FIELD

of California, Youngest
Delegate to the Convention of the National
Woman's Party in Washington, Attended by
Women From More Than Thirty States.

Riess: And who were the "charming men?"

Caldwell: They were lawyers, and they were people who marched--I was told, I didn't see this--in a parade on Fifth Avenue in New York in favor of the suffrage amendment.

I wasn't aware of any stiff-collared, severe feminists at all--except for Alice Paul, she was severe. She was really a formidable person just to sit in the room with. I wouldn't have known how to express it then, but I didn't feel you could make any personal relationship with her.

But in any case, I remember the pleasure of staying in this beautiful place. I was terribly ill at one time, just stomach upset, and I was embarrassed about that, more than anything. My mother tells in the oral history about when she went to present the cup commemorating early suffragists, and I was afraid and disoriented when I couldn't find her in this great mob.

Riess: Why don't you tell that story?

Caldwell: She was invited to present a cup in memory of the three famous suffragists in the beginning of the century: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucretia Mott. And that cup is down here at The Bancroft Library. They don't like to receive artifacts, but they did receive that one.

Riess: You were supposed to have been in the audience somewhere?

Caldwell: Yes, I was in the audience alone, you know, and I was really scared then when afterward I could not find my mother. The only time I remember panicking in my day was then. I really panicked. I don't remember how I found her, but I finally did, and I remember I was really upset.

Riess: Sara mentions sitting in the front row on that occasion with Jane Addams.

Caldwell: But I don't remember meeting Jane Addams. I probably did, but I don't remember. Later, when I graduated from high school, I told you I was one of the graduation speakers, and my topic was Jane Addams. So I knew who she was, but somehow or other--I probably did meet her, but it didn't make any impression. I knew my aunt, my mother's sister, Mary Parton, had worked at Hull House.

I don't know how I ever was able to make a public speech. That was my first appearance in public, and I was so nervous

because Mother and Pops and my father were all in the audience. They tried to hide, Mother and Pops, way up on top, but I knew they were there, and I was nervous as the dickens about that, lest my father should see them.

Riess: To go back a bit, why did your mother decide to take you to Washington? Was this a kind of coming-of-age trip or something?

Caldwell: I don't know, because I had to be excused from school. And of course, I was enormously pleased.

Riess: In your mother's oral history in the chronology the dates indicate that you went back in February 1921.

Caldwell: Well, I know it wasn't snowing, because as a Californian, I wouldn't have forgotten that. It was nice weather.

Riess: Your mother had decided this was important for you.

Caldwell: I don't know why she took me. But of course, I was enormously pleased. Such a rare thing.

Riess: When you shared the compartment on the train, was this a time when there was kind of an opportunity for intimacy between the two of you?

Caldwell: No. Always, my brother and I both felt that everything was just marvelous when we were with my mother. She was an exciting person, and she was very, very affectionate and demonstrative. But she was always preoccupied, too, with her own affairs. But on the other hand, when I say preoccupied, I don't mean that she didn't acknowledge a person and make a personal relationship; she did that too. But fundamentally, she was--this was a big responsibility for her.

Riess: I guess the question I have is, do you think your mother was beginning to see you as a separate person who was being brought up to carry on the movement in some way?

Caldwell: I don't think that.

I came across a little book, I'm ashamed to say I hadn't remembered it at all, that she gave me when I graduated from high school, with three poems to me in it. And every one of them was how sad I was. And even earlier in that little notebook that she kept when she was in that sanitarium in Pasadena in 1913 she spoke about how I was sad, and she saw great sorrow for me in my life. Well, of course, she brought it

on, to a great extent. But I never, ever resented her for her leaving my father. I just--this is the way it was.

Riess: Were there hints that in taking you to Washington she was opening a door for you?

Caldwell: No, I don't think so. I think it was just a nice thing for her to do at that point, and easy to do. I don't know how I ever got permission to leave school, and my father's permission, but anyway, we did that.

I just felt I was part of the suffrage movement, and very excited about it. The lobbying to me was of course an adult thing to be doing, too. But yes, I took on the attitudes of my mother. She was a very, very persuasive and enthusiastic person. I thought she was just wonderful, and it was a great pleasure.

Incidentally, at that time, at fifteen, I had my first lesson in I guess economic injustice. Maybe that's not the way of phrasing it, but I remember my aunt became radicalized by Darrow. She stopped working for Jane Addams, for Hull House, because Darrow had persuaded her that doing social work was just "mopping the floor with the faucet on," and--I suppose this is a cliché now--in order to really overcome social injustice, you had to have a new system by not having that source. And that made a great impression on me, that image. [A recent--June 1993--book on Darrow by Geoffrey Cowan describes vividly my Aunt Mary's relation to Darrow. KFC]

The Adult World, San Francisco

Caldwell: Really, as far as my mother was concerned, I lived in an adult world. There were no other people my age, anywhere. And I liked these people. I thought they were wonderful people. When I would go to San Francisco, there would never be any young people.

My first boyfriend was Jewish, and a San Franciscan. He was at Harvard. I was somewhat scornful of boys my own age, as adolescent girls almost universally are, because girls grow up so much more rapidly, socially anyway, than boys do.

Riess: How did you meet him?

Caldwell: I met him through people in San Francisco, I can't remember just how. I remember how shocked my Philadelphia aunt was that I should have a friend that was Jewish. You see, my parents had

so many Jewish friends, and they appreciated them so much, and I had never known there was such a distinction.

She wrote my mother in horror that I should be going out with a Jew. I was just astonished. People were people, as far as I was concerned. I was very much aware of racial differences between the Japanese in my school and whites, but not Jews. They were to me the most wonderful people. I have mentioned many, many times my affection and appreciation of the cultured Jews in San Francisco, because they were the ones in whose world I lived socially in San Francisco, and who were the creators of culture there, in music and art.

Riess: Who was the boyfriend?

Caldwell: His name was Bob--Robert--Wormser, of S&W [Sussman, Wormser] company. It wasn't long, and it really wasn't--he was a very self-centered person, and, I found, remote. [laughs]

Riess: After you came back from that Washington trip, even though you were still living with your father, and you were fifteen, it sounds like your social life had gravitated to San Francisco.

Caldwell: Yes, my social life was not with my contemporaries, with my peer group, it was always adults, with this one exception of Bob Wormser.

Rebellion, Reconciliation, Berkeley

Caldwell: When I graduated from junior high school I was Titania in A Midsummer Night's Dream in our graduation play--even though I had dark hair! I think I mentioned that. We had a marvelous time over that, a wonderful time. But my brother's death cast a great shadow on my life, a sobering, terrible shadow on my life.

When I got to Berkeley High School I didn't get involved in school activities at all. I didn't feel part of the life of the school. I ran for an office one time, knowing perfectly well I would be defeated and that I was a kind of an excuse for somebody else to get elected. I felt socially isolated. But that, I think, is not just my situation. I think many girls feel that way.

And then, of course, as I told you, my father required me to go to prayer meeting on Wednesday evenings here in Berkeley

up on LeRoy Avenue, and all of my friends were meeting at one another's houses on Wednesday evenings to dance. I couldn't do this. I did feel resentful about that.

Riess: Did you discuss that with him?

Caldwell: No. You see, girls then didn't confront their parents. They accepted what they were told. It's quite a different world now. There was no rebellion then; I did exactly what my father told me I had to do.

A little bit later I felt a secret rebellion. I remember doing something that was very, very--I was frightfully good, just awfully good, and that's too bad--but anyway, I remember taking a piece of chalk and going to the Baptist Church down on Dana Street when nobody was looking and writing on the board, "Down with the church!" And I felt deliciously wicked! I wouldn't have offended my father, would never let him know I had done this, but I had the most wonderful sense of release in doing that.

That was my only kind of rebellion. That, and once eating all of the chocolate desserts that our housekeeper had fixed for the family for dinner! She couldn't believe it. She just laughed, instead of scolding me. The only times I ever remember being consciously a very bad girl. I was painfully, painfully law-abiding.

Riess: Do you know now any of the girls you were in high school with?

Caldwell: One, to whose house I went to a party after I graduated from Berkeley High School. She died recently. She and I were very, very good friends. She lived in a very conventional household. Her mother was an interior decorator, everything in place, you know. A surprising friendship. I was brought up in sort of ragamuffin way. Not quite--that's a bit of an exaggeration.

Riess: So when you and your husband came back--I'm not really skipping forward, I'm just following through--when you came back to Berkeley, it wasn't as if you were coming back to a place that was really home.

Caldwell: Oh, I was terribly depressed when we came back here to live, after I was married, from the point of view of being in Berkeley. Everywhere I looked, there were memories that made me very sad. It took a long time before I developed this passionate love of Berkeley which I have had for many years.

I really felt I couldn't bear to live here in Berkeley at first. But I got a job fairly soon, and that took me to San Francisco. And I had my own life there. Then as my husband got involved, and as we developed so many friendships in Berkeley, Berkeley had an entirely new association.

Berkeley Fire, 1923

Riess: What are your memories of the Berkeley fire in 1923?

Caldwell: Well, they're very, very vivid. The fire was very similar, in its rapid advance and the velocity of the wind, to the recent fire that took so many houses and lives. This fire came with the same suddenness, and had also not been controlled when it could have been in the beginning. It had been burning for two days in Contra Costa County, and when the Berkeley Fire Department was alerted of this, they said, "But that's not in Alameda County."

It came sweeping down, up over the top of Buena Vista, and the smoke was so intense that you couldn't see the flames, it was so close to the house. My father, as a clergyman, as he should have done, was helping people, instead of getting the treasures out of his house.

Riess: Where were you?

Caldwell: Strange--. I was dumping some cleaning fluid down the sink, because of the fire, and all of the sudden we realized that the fire was there. Cars were burning in the street, so I grabbed up my dog, a set of Shakespeare, and a Chinese rug, and we rushed out and got in a car just in time. It was a three-story house, and it was destroyed like tossing a carton into a bonfire. The whole thing just went--you saw it on television in a recent fire [October 1991]--it just went like that.

We got away. So then, my mother's car was downtown in a garage, out of the fire area.

Riess: She kept her car over here?

Caldwell: No. I sometimes drove it over. I had learned to drive in San Francisco, and frequently acted as chauffeur for Mother and Pops. On this fateful day of the Berkeley fire I had parked my mother's car in a downtown garage. I can't remember why.

But as I was leaving, a Catholic priest came along, and I flagged him down. He took my Chinese rug and Shakespeare. I kept my dog, you see.

One of the things that did surprise me at the time, and in recollection, was the number of people who came just out of curiosity, and didn't offer to help, and we could have used every car that came by to help us. People did not do that very much. Some college students who knew where their professors lived saved their houses by getting out with hoses and so on before the water gave out. But for the most part, no. And practically all the roofs were made of wood at that time, and all curled up in this north wind.

Anyway, we got away, and I said to my father, "I'll just go over to San Francisco."

I didn't know that my face was all covered with soot, and my hair probably. And as we rushed out of the house I had left my purse behind, and my money. I thought I needed some more gas, and not realizing that we were now a disaster area--you know, you're just so focused on what's immediately before you in a disaster of that kind--I went to a gasoline station and I said, "I'm terribly sorry, but I left my purse in the house and it was just burned up. Would you trust me for five gallons?"

"Oh, lady, we'll fill your tank!"

I thought, that's kind of surprising. Then I got down to the ferry, auto ferry, same appeal. "Would you trust me?"

"Oh, come right on!"

I got on the ferry boat, and looked back, and here was this enormous area still burning, still smoking. And all these chimneys. I have pictures of the ruins. I realized why people were so kind.

Then I got up to Russian Hill and Pops--I burst into tears. I said, "Oh, Pops, our house has all burned."

"It has, Kay darling? Well!"

So Pops did what he always did for comfort. The cook wasn't in that evening, and he went out and put olive oil on a chicken he took out of the refrigerator, and put it in the oven. The answer to anguish was a good meal. [laughs]

He had been working at his desk in his study, which was on the west side of the house, in other words, not facing towards the East Bay. He had no idea that Berkeley was a disaster area. And anyway, when he was absorbed in his work nothing existed but the focus. I've never seen anybody concentrate the way he could concentrate. Except my husband later when he was writing, the same kind of complete absorption.

Riess: But these stories--. You've been through too much, I think.

Caldwell: When I went to live with my mother and stepfather after the Berkeley fire of '23, when my father's house burned down, I just was enough of an adolescent to assert myself. My father said, "Well, there are nice, kind people in Berkeley that will put us up," and I said, "Dad, I'm going over to San Francisco." And I said it with enough assurance that he didn't question it.

Riess: Did you go over because you felt needed, or what?

Caldwell: Well, that was my other home.

Riess: What was the reason you made that decision rather than deciding to stay with your father?

Caldwell: With my father? Well, he had no home. I wouldn't be staying with him really.

I really wanted to go very much, but I also had a loyalty both ways. I felt it just sort of was the right thing to do. It seemed normal, because after all, it was my other home, and I was very happy there.

Riess: You still had another year of school back here?

Caldwell: No, I had finished high school that June.

College Thoughts

Riess: When did your father and Pops and Sara talk to you about college, and where you should go?

Caldwell: In those days you could not go to an Eastern college if you graduated from any California high school; you were not prepared for college board exams. There was a group of businessmen in San Francisco who didn't know this, and they had a scholarship

fund for Yale for any California boy, but none could qualify! So there was no use my trying for an Eastern college.

When the European trip came up that absolutely postponed any thought of college. I had thought, once having decided to go to Europe, and with Mother and Pops having planned to stay there indefinitely--they planned to become permanent expatriates--that I would go to college in Europe. Very, very unrealistically thought of the Sorbonne. Of course, I didn't know French well enough to do that. But I had this romantic idea of college in Europe.

Well, then my stepfather had a frightful experience. The government challenged a huge law fee he'd had representing many years of legal work. They wanted to count it as one year's taxable income. It was a million dollars, so to tax it as a year's earnings would have ruined him. That was the money he was going to retire on, you see, so he had to come back to fight that case, and he fought it himself right up to the Supreme Court, and won. Else, heaven knows what they would have done, financially, had he not won.

But the assumption had been that I would go somewhere in Europe to college. We never talked it over, but that was part of the idea. I don't think I'd ever have gotten into the Sorbonne.

People: Genevieve Taggard, Hedwiga Reicher, Ed Grabhorn

Riess: Today you were going to talk about the amazing crowd of people that swarmed through life with Sara and the Colonel on Russian Hill.

Caldwell: Yes, they were remarkable. Genevieve Taggard was very important to me--and I've discovered subsequently that almost every adolescent girl needs someone that's not a family member to talk about sex with, and things that she couldn't possibly talk to her mother about. I have myself been in later years in that position with one particular young woman here in Berkeley.

Riess: Genevieve Taggard was a neighbor in the city?

Caldwell: She was a neighbor, and she and Mother were very close. Her husband, who had a terrible nervous breakdown, her first husband--not Kenneth Durant, but the first husband, Bob somebody-or-other whose last name I've forgotten--were very good

to me. Almost all Mother's friends treated me pretty much as an adult, but Genevieve treated me on two levels, but fused together. I was aware she was an adult, but she listened, and she cared. I just adored her.

Riess: Did you really talk about sex?

Caldwell: Somewhat. Not too much, but a little bit. She was so frank about her own life, you see. And this was interesting to me, of course. Bob Wolfe, that was his name. He had a terrible nervous breakdown. But Genevieve, I never felt any even unconscious condescension because of the difference of our ages. She treated me as if we were almost the same age. It was a wonderful friendship.

Then there was Hedwiga Reicher. She was German. And she came to San Francisco. I don't know how she happened to come. But Maurice Browne was another very famous person that came from England to the house, who was trying to establish a little theater in San Francisco. And Pops and Mother, being hospitable and welcoming, and always wanting to help people, helped raise money for that. Now, whether she [Hedwiga Reicher] came on that account, I don't know. I just know she was enormously impressive as an actress.

The house in San Francisco--. Bingham, who is the biographer of Colonel Wood, doesn't know anything about that life in San Francisco, and had a wrong date there which I helped him out on. Anyway, there was a step between the living room and the dining room that made a kind of stage, and Hedwiga Reicher would get up there and recite ballads.

One night about midnight she was yelling, "I have killed my father, mother--" this is an English poem, and the poor servant in the house came rushing out, he thought some terrible thing was happening. [laughing] I've never forgotten that in connection with Hedwiga Reicher.

Riess: And who might have been there on a typical night?

Caldwell: Oh, there was no typical night. Oh, no. There were people there all the time. Mother and Pops moved, you know, away from San Francisco for two reasons: one, that my stepfather didn't like the late afternoon wind on account of his sinus trouble, and two, that they had guests at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They never had any time to themselves. They were so adored and sought-after.

Riess: These would be out-of-town people?

Caldwell: Oh, people from New York, from Europe, all over. And then, locally.

Pops was very, very much interested in the man who became internationally famous as a printer, Edwin Grabhorn. Grabhorn originally, with all his talent, nevertheless had to earn his living by doing advertising scripts and visual presentations. Pops helped to finance him so that he didn't have to do that and could start his own wonderful press. I just loved Ed.

Later on, after Mother and Pops lived in Los Gatos, they'd come up to San Francisco and stay in some dumpy hotel--Pops, who was so generous, hated to spend money on hotels. He would then wander the streets--Pops would--going from place to place, and he always went to see Ed Grabhorn.

When I went to college I took a course and read the whole of The Divine Comedy of Dante. And one day I went to see Ed. "Jesus, Kay"--he always said Jesus something-or-other--"I understand you know how to read Italian." He pretended to talk like the common man. He was not formally educated, but he was wonderfully read, extremely sophisticated. But he gave the impression of just being one of the common people.

"Jesus, Kay, you can read Dante? I've got a wonderful edition of Dante somewhere here." And he went to a drawer full of miscellaneous papers and dragged out this beautiful vellum copy, three volumes--Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradisio--and he wanted to give them to me.

Well, I knew they were worth thousands of dollars. And when he picked up a pen and started to inscribe it to me, I grabbed the pen out of his hand. I said, "Ed, you must not give these to me! These are very valuable."

"Jesus, Kay, I can't read this language! You can read it." And he took the pen and he inscribed these beautiful books to me.

Riess: And you have them?

Caldwell: I did have them. Eventually I sold them, and I'm sorry now that I did.

Riess: What was the edition?

Caldwell: Ashendene Press, very, very beautiful. I had them at Harvard when I was there, and the man who taught the course in fine

printing borrowed them and had them in the Wagner Library on display at one time.

But anyway, that was a warm friendship I made. I just loved Ed. He had a great gift for friendship, and he liked young people very much. I remember in London one time there was an international exhibition of fine printing, and for the most part each printer had one volume on display, but for Ed there was an entire case. In London! He was marvelous, and utterly unassuming. I met fine people through him, too.

People: Powys Brothers, Nellie and Maurice Browne, Lincoln Steffens

Caldwell: Another person that used to come and stay at the house was John Cowper Powys. I can't remember what Mother says about Powys, but my brother and I--I'm just trying to think. My brother never was alive to have known anything about the Broadway house, but Mother must have known him [Powys] earlier on, because my brother and I had not heard a British accent before, and we kept our faces straight and were very polite, and then we'd go in the kitchen and just roar with laughter and imitate.

Powys refused to use a linen napkin, and Mother had to buy silk handkerchiefs. He also refused to put his letters in just any mailbox. I don't know what his basis of choice was, but he would go and find a box, and he would put in his letter--I can see him do this--shake the box and be sure that that letter dropped down. He was very eccentric.

His brother Llewelyn also stayed. Llewelyn I was aware of as a man, because he was a kind of--what shall I say--he looked on all women with a calculating eye. [laughs]

There were a number of famous writers whose names I can't remember from New York. My grandmother, my mother's mother, used to come to visit, and there was one famous writer, Edgar Lee Masters--I'm pretty sure my mother tells the story--who denounced Christ at the dinner. And my grandmother! I remember that incident, I was there at that time.

Also I remember once when we were celebrating my stepfather's birthday, and everybody was proposing toasts, I got up and said, "Here's to Pops, almost everybody loves you," meaning my father didn't, you see. And I couldn't understand why everybody burst into roars of laughter. [laughter] I was

dismayed to think that I had made any kind of mistake. It was my honesty. I had to lie all the time, and obviously my father hated Pops, so by saying "almost everybody loves you" I thought I was being faithful to the truth.

There was Nellie Browne. Now, she was a wonderful person, the wife of Maurice, but he was having an affair with someone else. I guess my dislike of men in some ways--I mean not that I dislike men in general, but I felt suspicious of them--was because I just loved Nellie, and I knew that her heart was breaking because of her husband's affair with a younger woman.

Riess: Who were Nellie and Maurice Browne?

Caldwell: Maurice Browne was the famous producer, the one I mentioned a few minutes ago, who came to San Francisco with the idea of establishing a little theater there. And there was a great to-do about this, and great attempts to raise funds for this.

Riess: The Colonel was financing it?

Caldwell: Yes. And you see, the thing of it is, whenever anybody came with a problem of a cultural sort, you see, like Grabhorn, Maurice Browne, and so on, Mother and Pops always were willing to try to help them.

Riess: Financially?

Caldwell: Yes. Pops really put Grabhorn on his feet, you see, in the beginning. I don't ever know what came of the fundraising for the little theater. I know it did not become a reality. But that's why the Browns from London were there in San Francisco.

Riess: Did your parents have any really radical or Communist friends?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, indeed they did. Yes, they did. And for a long time were very much interested in the Russian--what they would call experiment in social justice. And they were completely disillusioned when they found that there was no such thing as a fair trial, and that just finished Communism for them. But yes, and my Aunt Mary was very, very radical, and she lived nearby on Russian Hill.

Riess: Now, these other names: Lincoln Steffens.

Caldwell: I was very fond of Lincoln Steffens, very, very fond. I have a letter of his to me. I was always uncomfortable with him in the sense he was so witty. A lot of people felt that way. He always had this marvelous reply, you know, just for publication

almost. I was very fond of him, but I did feel intellectually so inferior that I felt a little uncomfortable, too. We met them in Italy, Steffens and his wife--though not his wife at that time--and I thought he was just absolutely a delightful person, full of humor, too.

Riess: When you looked around at these people, made these acquaintances, did it begin to shape some sense of what you'd like to do in your life?

Caldwell: They didn't shape it at all, no. I wanted to have a profession, but I wasn't influenced by these people. Actually, I always felt--not exactly inferior, but I never thought of having a life of any distinction in a profession.

Riess: When you talk about a sharp retort and great wit and everything, would that describe your mother too?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, and it was always a joke at the table. They had a live-in servant, a Chinese named Ming. He would bring in a dish to her which she would serve at the table then, and she would get so involved in talking that the spoon would be dripping over the casserole, but she'd forget to put it on the plate. Everybody was waiting for their dinner, and Pops used to say, "Now, Sara, we're all hungry," or something like that. She was so involved in ideas.

She really loved people and she loved discussion. That meant more to her than anything else. That impressed me very much. Yet with so many people coming and going it was very hard for me to have any time with her. That was the only time I had to see her, and oftentimes I'd feel--I don't remember feeling angry, but I used to think, "Oh, if only we could have a little time alone." And then oftentimes she was gone on weekends.

Sexual Awareness

Caldwell: If I had been the free-living kind of young person that lives today, I could have had a fine time inviting people in to live with me there, but I was a very conscientious, straight-laced young woman. Really I think afraid of any kind of sexual experiment anyway.

I remember bringing over a quite sophisticated, very well educated young friend from Berkeley, whose name I don't remember, and feeling very, very happy to be able to share this

beautiful house with her. We would go to the French theater. But you see how serious I was. Life was serious, life was earnest, you know. [laughs]

The involvement of my parents in so many political and cultural activities was a pattern. The trivial, kicking-up-your-heels, having fun life was just not part of it at all, and that's too bad, in a way. I had no sense ever of play.

Riess: I imagine you must have been very beautiful.

Caldwell: I was a pretty girl. I don't know whether I was beautiful or not, but I was pretty, and I remember being surprised at people remarking on it. Or with Llewelyn Powys, I remember I was very much aware of his looking at me in a sexual way, and being embarrassed by it.

Riess: And you never--?

Caldwell: No, I never had any affairs with any of them.

Riess: [laughs] I wasn't going to ask that, but thank you. You never had any affairs?

Caldwell: No, I really didn't. I was just a really old-fashioned girl.

Riess: And yet was it not a free-living period?

Caldwell: Well, it was. I don't know why I was so straight-laced and puritanical.

I remember when we were abroad and living in Sorrento, and I went for the day to the island of Capri with a bunch of young American art students who were "doing" the European trip. We got marooned there because of a storm. I had a whole lot of--I was always so careful about any security, and I had a whole lot of travelers checks and temporarily financed everybody.

I went off on a walk with one of these young men, and we sat in a cave because of the storm, looking out on the Bay of Naples. And I remember thinking he was quite attractive. Then he told me about his girlfriend at home, and I thought, "Oh, I mustn't be interested in this young man at all. He's got a girlfriend at home." I was very, very moral and straight-laced about sexual things. No possibility of having a relationship with this man, when he's got a girl at home. I had, very, very strong moral code.

Riess: Did people talk about religion and morality?

Caldwell: Well, it's a strange thing considering my father's fixation on it really, but probably because of my mother's having left my father, largely because she couldn't accept his fundamentalist beliefs, I sided with her, you see, on that. I took her stance on religion unconsciously--not with any conscious decision. But on the other hand, I didn't want to offend my father.

People: Tony Luhan. Ansel Adams. Ralph Stackpole

Riess: Do you remember Tony Luhan?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, I remember Tony the Indian. Yes, he came, and you know, he was illiterate. My mother with her wonderfully, wonderfully cordial way, was trying to make conversation with him. She usually could get people to talk. She couldn't get anything out of him, so finally she said, "Would you like some coffee?" [speaking slowly and deliberately] "I like coffee," he said. I heard him say this, "I like coffee." And that's all the conversation she could get out of him.

Riess: I hadn't realized he was illiterate.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. A complete lack of--like Lady Chatterly's lover.

Riess: Was he devastatingly attractive?

Caldwell: I didn't think so. [laughs] I thought, how could anybody want to have anything to do with him? I thought he was a lump.

Riess: That's funny. Ansel Adams?

Caldwell: Oh, Ansel Adams, I just loved Ansel Adams. Ansel was a great influence in my life, in terms of photography. Much later I had contacts with him and made a friendship, when I was in art history and going abroad.

Riess: You were going to tell me a story about Ansel Adams.

Caldwell: Yes. I had been studying about Asia and Asian art for a long time, but I never had been there, and finally, in 1958, I went abroad, by myself, for two months. I sat next to Ansel Adams at a dinner party before I left and told him I was going to India and Hong Kong and so on. And he said, "What kind of camera are you going to take?" "Oh," I said, "Ansel, I'm not taking a camera. I have no mechanical aptitudes."

"Kay, you're going to go to all these remote places" --remember, at that time people hadn't traveled everywhere the way they do now--"and not take a camera?" Two days later I got a letter from Ansel on legal-sized paper listing the make of a camera and all its parts, and after each part it said, "Requires no mechanical aptitude." He then called me up, and he made an appointment, and he took me to a camera store and saw to it that I took a camera, and showed me one that wouldn't require any mechanical aptitude.

I was very indebted to him. I gave all my slides to Mills College. But otherwise, without that encouragement, I never in the world would have undertaken photography. You see, cameras are made today so that you don't need to know anything about photography, focusing or anything else. But that wasn't true at that time.

Riess: How had you known Ansel Adams?

Caldwell: Mother and Pops.

You know that he did my wedding pictures? How they knew him I don't know. But Mother and Pops always enjoyed music, and Ansel at that time was not into photography, he was a musician. He was a pianist. Somehow or other they knew him, probably through Cedric Wright, who was a violinist and a photographer. However they got into that circle I don't know. But they were very, very good friends.

Ansel was not a photographer then in the sense that anybody ever heard of him, or even thought he was doing photography--as anyone might do now. But Mother and Pops made arrangements--I didn't know Ansel then at all, except to see him here and there, but not on a personal basis like the incident I just described--and Ansel made the photographs. As a matter of fact, I have been trying to decide whether to give them to the University of California, or what to do with them. Mills College wants them very, very much.

They are not good pictures from the point of view of--they are beautiful technically, but from the point of view of grouping they are really a disaster. Ansel said so himself. He said, "You know, I just can't photograph people." I wouldn't make that statement about him, but he acknowledged the fact that he didn't photograph people well at all. [Riess and Caldwell look at photographs]

Riess: How about Ralph Stackpole?

Caldwell: Oh, I'm glad you mentioned him. Yes, he did my bust when I was fourteen. My mother commissioned that.

Riess: Did you go to his studio?

Caldwell: Yes. The thing of it was, the situation is so threatening today, wandering the streets alone, you know, but that wasn't true then. I oftentimes walked from the Ferry Building--I think I mentioned that before--up to Russian Hill rather than taking the cable car.

When I was sitting for the bust Stackpole did of me I simply walked from the Ferry Building to Montgomery Street, that area. They have since destroyed the building [Montgomery Block Building] for the Transamerica Building. But that whole artists' area, I would go there.

At first I thought he loved poetry, and I recited Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," but he only wanted me to stay still, you see? And I realized the joke was on me! I thought he was just loving to hear Arnold, and Shelley and Keats, only to realize he was not listening at all, but just making his sketches.

I simply adored him, he was such an attractive, companionable man, but again, not in any--just as a friend. He had the most delightful wife, an uneducated French woman who learned English by reading comic strips, colloquial English. She was lovely. Eventually they went to live in France permanently, because of her. But I thought he was marvelous, yes.

People: Helen and Ansley Salz, the Menuhins, and Others From the World of Music

Riess: Helen Salz, whom I interviewed, corresponded with him.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. You interviewed Helen? I just to this day have such a love and respect for Helen Salz.

Riess: When did you know her?

Caldwell: Always knew her, because my mother--they were such long, such close friends. I used to go see Helen in her old age; I used to go see her regularly, every few weeks, because I liked her so much, and I admired her painting. Our friendship grew in depth

because I always "reviewed" her paintings when they were on exhibition. She knew that I admired her work.

Ansley Salz left us \$1,000 in his will, to our amazement, with which we bought that piano [Bösendorfer] over there. We couldn't believe it. He was very fond of us--he admired Jim--and he was so wealthy, and I guess he thought, "Those poor struggling people in the academic world are always underpaid," or something like that.

Riess: And you found a Bösendorfer?

Caldwell: Yes, through a Chronicle ad. We knew what a fine piano it was because of our friendship with Adolph Baller, who was accompanist for Yehudi Menuhin, and who sponsored the Bösendorfer in the San Francisco area.

That piano was greatly admired by Lili Kraus. She was the friend of mutual friends of ours--I think the Slosses of Santa Barbara. They brought Lili Kraus to our house and she "tried out" the piano and loved it and offered to give a concert! Two other great musical friends, Albert Elkus and Roy Bogas, both expressed how much they approved the purchase! [laughs]

Riess: Were there any other concerts performed?

Caldwell: Not by anyone in the Lili Kraus ballpark, but Abramowitsch liked to play Schubert on it.

Riess: Well, that's a fine story, and a generous gesture from Ansley Salz.

Caldwell: We saw a lot of the Salzes when we came here to live. They were very, very influential in our lives. Helen was on the [American] Civil Liberties Union board, and my husband was too. But we're skipping in time now. It was later in our own well-established adult life that we knew the Salzes and that I knew Ansley. It wasn't part of my girlhood.

Riess: What can you tell me about your mother and Colonel Wood's relationship with the music world?

Caldwell: They just loved music. Technically they had no knowledge of it, but they were great appreciators. Maybe because of the proximity of Yehudi Menuhin, who brought so many musicians into their lives; they met musicians they wouldn't otherwise have met without that personal contact with Menuhin as a neighbor.

I can remember how much Pops enjoyed the Beethoven Quartets, without any knowledge whatsoever of music, and as he used to say himself, unable to carry a tune. He had what we called his kitchen song, when he was making beaten biscuits--the only thing he ever cooked, and he used to love to make punches, wine punches--he would sing, "Humm, humm, humm, humm." That was his musical expression, and only when he was in the kitchen making these biscuits, and covering himself and the floor with flour.

The beaten biscuits was something he learned to make I think when he was in the army, and stranded somewhere on a march--I'm just hazarding that this is it--where there was nothing but flour and water available.

Riess: No rising ingredient?

Caldwell: No rising ingredient at all, they were hard as the table!

Riess: Did they have chamber music?

Caldwell: I don't remember a full trio or quartet. They were invited over to the Menuhins for concerts. And I remember Yehudi kind of laughingly picking up a musical instrument and playing. It seems to me that when it came to music in their own home it was confined to the piano. But since Menuhin introduced them to so many instrumentalists, stringed instruments, they were invited to concerts.

I remember that Abramowitsch, who became a very famous musician in our community, used to play at the house. He was brought there by the Erskines. Dorothy and Morse Erskine befriended the Abramowitsches [Bernard and Eva] when they first came to America with the influx of Jews under the Hitler purge. They brought Abramowitsch down to The Cats and I remember his playing then. They had a very nice piano there, a good Steinway. That piano was moved from San Francisco.

Amusingly enough, early on I remember Ansel Adams. He used to come and play, and I remember how impressed I was with the quality of his music. You know, before he was a photographer he was a pianist.

Riess: In your life music has been important too.

Caldwell: My passionate love of music was definitely a development of my maturity. That is to say, when I was a little girl I liked music, but I had no exposure to the great musical masters, to speak of, not much. I remember once my father, who came from a

very musical family, took me over to San Francisco when I was a little girl, and I heard Madame Schumann-Heink sing outdoors. My father, perhaps because his funds were so limited, we didn't go to concerts very much. I can't remember going with him at all to concerts, and he just loved music.

I remember first going to concerts actually at the University of Wisconsin, and that was with the man that was to become my husband. He was very fond of music, too. And then, of course, when I went to Radcliffe, everybody went to the Boston Symphony on Saturday night. That was your night out. I'm sure now the social life is more active, but when I was there it was almost assumed that you only went out on a Saturday night. And good Harvard and Radcliffe people went to the Boston Symphony. I discovered symphony music when I was in college, and then I became an absolute addict.

Riess: And Mills was a center for contemporary music.

Caldwell: I wasn't involved with music at Mills. I knew Madame Milhaud very well. She used to audit my classes, actually. But I was in awe of her husband. I discovered later that the reason it was so difficult to communicate with him was on account of his deafness. You thought that he disapproved of something you said because he looked rather stern. That wasn't it at all; he hadn't heard a word. [laughs]

Riess: And the Berkeley Piano Club?

Caldwell: That was very recent. I have only belonged to the Piano Club for eight or ten years. I don't know when it was established, but there are so many people with musical talent in this area that there was no problem in finding membership on the professional level. Two-thirds of the members are professionals, and one-third are appreciators. Margaret Rowell was responsible for nominating me for membership.

I remember, when they acknowledged the new members, my telling this rather amusing story about the Menuhins. Someone visited them, and Yehudi and Hepzibah played the violin and piano. Yaltah, the youngest Menuhin child [born 1922], was about six or seven, and somebody said, "Yaltah, what do you do? And she said, 'I think.'" And I said that my relationship to the Piano Club, since I didn't perform, was that I thought. [laughter]

I audited a number of courses by Albert Elkus, at the University, on the appreciation of music. And another thing, because of our meeting so many musicians at Yehudi Menuhin's,

the Alma Trio--piano, violin, and cello--which was established there, when they gave their concerts in Berkeley they would come here to stay and to tune up and we would give them food. So the contacts were made at Los Gatos when the musicians we met there came to Berkeley to play.

The Alma Trio started at Yehudi Menuhin's [in 1944 at the Alma estate, Los Gatos], and then it became a trio that traveled all over the United States, and concertized everywhere. Gabor Rejto, the cellist, was from Czechoslovakia, and of course [Adolph] Baller, who was the pianist, was German. And Andor Toth, the violinist. They were all refugees, really, from Hitler.

People: Beniamino Bufano

Riess: I would be interested in your first impressions of Beniamino Bufano. Your parents were apparently smitten!

Caldwell: Oh, yes. I thought he was an infernal nuisance, and wondered why he hung around so much.

Riess: For Sara and the Colonel, what was the attraction?

Caldwell: I think they admired his work and wanted him to have opportunities to have commissions. They thought he was very talented.

Riess: He decided that he would marry you, according to the book One of Benny's Faces: [A Study of Beniamino Bufano [1886-1970]] by Virginia B. Lewin, Exposition Press, 1980.]

Caldwell: I think that was purely opportunistic, he wanted a free lunch. I think he simply thought if he could marry me then his economic future was secure. But I must say that I hadn't the faintest idea that he had any interest in me. Personally. Not any. I was astonished in the statement that he had any interest in me in a personal way.

Riess: Were your parents the patrons of any other artists, in the way they took on Bufano?

Caldwell: They patronized Stackpole, and they patronized Ray Boynton. But they were established artists, so in a sense they weren't helping them to develop a clientele as they were helping Bufano to develop his contacts. Pops belief always was--he said it

over and over--that he believed in patronizing the work of local and living artists. So in the case of Bufano it was helping somebody to become established.

Riess: Did Pops have connections to the San Francisco Art Institute?

Caldwell: No, not to my knowledge. He probably knew people connected to it, but he wasn't on the board or any of that, he wasn't an official ever. Somehow or other, established organizations that had to do with creative art, he didn't seem to be involved with those. He knew artists personally; these are all very personal contacts, not official.

Riess: Was Bufano a kind of lame duck?

Caldwell: No, it was more that his work wasn't known and they wanted to publicize it and find him contacts. I don't think there was a pitying attitude, or condescending in any way. I think they felt he had talent and they wanted to give him full expression of it.

You probably know that Bufano was befriended by many other people beside Colonel Wood. Leon Liebes, for example, and Albert Bender. And he turned against them all in a most despicable way. It wasn't just Colonel Wood who was sued, but all of his benefactors had problems with him, his ingratitude and false accusations and so on.

The Home on Russian Hill

Riess: Russian Hill, more details. Did you have a bedroom that was always yours?

Caldwell: Yes. I had a bedroom that was perfectly charming, and they put a beautiful little French motif wallpaper on it for me. It had a balcony on it looking off to the east. And then Mother and Pops had a large room. That picture over there--there was a fireplace in their room, and that picture was over it. They had a lovely large room.

Riess: That picture being?

Caldwell: That's a Twachtman. Yes, that's the most valuable thing I own. There were two fireplaces in the house, and this painting was over the fireplace up in their bedroom. Downstairs was a beautiful large living room, and over the fireplace was Albert

Pinkham Ryder's "Tempest," now in the Detroit Museum. And there were lots of Hassams in the house, and beautiful Chinese rugs.

Pops just loved every kind of art medium, whether it was Greek coins or textiles or Impressionist paintings.

Riess: It sounds like he liked luxury.

Caldwell: I never thought of it that way. I'd say rather quality, except for those inferior hotels they stayed in! He loved good food, and he loved quality. He didn't like luxury in the sense of just spending money on fashionable places to dine, but he enjoyed good food and we used to go to Coppa's Restaurant a great deal in San Francisco, off of California Street. Coppa's was extremely sympathetic to the economic plight of artists. He would give them food in exchange for paintings, which lined the walls of the restaurant.

Riess: That's the old Bohemian San Francisco, isn't it?

Caldwell: That's right. And as I say, we used to go there to lunch very often, and Pops was very fond of it. Quality is the thing. He couldn't bear to ever be given any oil that wasn't olive oil. But one day we went in there, and they gave him a salad with Wesson oil. He was outraged. He put down his fork, he pushed back his chair, and he threw down his napkin and walked out, because he'd been given salad that didn't have olive oil.

Riess: That's dramatic, isn't it?

Caldwell: He rarely showed any temper, but the idea that in an old restaurant where he was a habitue that anybody would insult him like that! I was just aghast.

Riess: When you talked about ambivalence about all the people who were around Sara and the Colonel, did Sara want to get away?

Caldwell: Oh, they loved people; they could never become hermits, ever. They were much sought after, and they entertained beautifully, and with warmth, and with an enormously exciting kind of a--both an intimacy and on the larger scale of dinner parties.

Riess: Your mother and the Colonel were such passionate people, as expressed in their letters.

Caldwell: Yes, they were, my mother particularly, that's true. She felt everything very, very deeply. I've been so interested in reading a lot of letters in connections with social problems, and they are always passionate about whatever the issue may be.

Riess: Is her "voice," as it were, in the letters, the same as it was in reality?

Caldwell: Yes--very definitely. She was very emotional, but she was also a very intellectual person. I know there was some writer who criticized her emotionality, but I think that was unfair because she had an interesting combination of emotion and intellect. I think she had an ability to think out her reasons very clearly for espousing a cause. It wasn't just a gut-level thing at all.

Los Gatos, and the Marengos

Caldwell: They did want to do their writing, that's why they said they wanted to leave the city. And when they went to Los Gatos, they put on their stationery, "Visits by appointment only." But then, of course, what happened was that the people who were callous and unthoughtful would pay no attention and drop in, and for this reason they built the little studio, which was about an eighth of a mile distant from the house, up the hill. Then the housekeeper could honestly say, "No, they're not at home." That was the reason, they said, that they built it.

They would go up--I think I mentioned this before--with a basket of fruit, and French bread and Monterey jack cheese, and some wine, and they'd go to their separate rooms in the studio, and then would meet for lunch.

You know, thinking back on those twenty or so years at Los Gatos, what an ideal life it was! I never thought of it as luxurious. I never thought of my stepfather as a wealthy man, or that this was a luxurious life. I thought, "Well, they live this way, but other people have other styles." I didn't think of it as unusual until I was much, much older.

Riess: Were the Marengos always part of the Los Gatos life?

Caldwell: Yes. Vincent came to the United States as a very young man, adolescent, a poor immigrant from Italy. And so was Mary. He got employment at the novitiate, the Catholic establishment across the way from Mother and Pops' place, picking grapes and learning how to make wine.

He never was given any education [by the novitiate], and it was an educational institution! His bitterness against the Catholic church cannot be exaggerated, because they didn't educate him. A highly intelligent man.

When the Second World War came, and wages went up--of course, they were working on a very small salary, pre-war wages, for Mother and Pops, who later financed a lovely house for them when they retired--the bitterness was increased about his poverty.

Riess: And he was with your family how long?

Caldwell: Thirty years.

How they first met I'm not sure, but Mother and Pops needed help on the place, and I think he came first just by the day, or something like that. I'm just hazarding this as what happened. And then he was offered that full-time job.

He was not married to Mary then; she was married to another man, who treated her outrageously, and by whom she'd had her children. She finally got a divorce, and I think Pops helped her on that. She was very frightened of this other man, very timid. Vincent loved her very much, and they were married, and then they came to live in the house which Mother and Pops had built a short distance from their own house. They were just the most marvelous people.

People: Noel Sullivan

Riess: Tell me about Noel Sullivan. You knew him?

Caldwell: I knew him and loved him very, very much. He was one of the most impressive human beings I've ever known. He was a man who was born to great wealth. I knew a lot of wealthy people through Mother and Pops, but I'd never known a man who accepted it as a way of life, that is to say, not having to prove himself in a profession or a business. He spent his life in music. Of course, he had a very good voice, beautiful bass voice. He would entertain his friends.

He was not sufficiently gifted musically to be in the big time, but he spent his life devoted to helping other people, particularly blacks. He was extremely fond of black people. Marian Anderson, he helped in her education, and Langston Hughes, and so on--not that Langston was a musician. For the most part, he identified himself with music and musicians, but he helped any black person of talent.

He always lived very lavishly, and when my husband and I were engaged, he gave us the most beautiful party in San Francisco. That was during what I call my Italian phase, and Noel had lived in Italy part of the time. I loved the Italian language and Italian people. For the party he had Italian music and Italian friends, Italian food, and a beautiful, beautiful table set with Italian dishes.

So we were very close to him. But on the other hand, I hated the idea of being indebted to people who were very wealthy. He used to offer us tickets to the opera, and I declined them, because I thought we could never reciprocate. Later on he used to invite us down to visit him in Carmel in the little cottage he had there, or let us have it for ourselves.

And finally, when my husband went on sabbatical leave, Noel took our dog. He was passionately fond of dogs. He had maybe ten dogs around. The only unaesthetic thing in Noel's life was the fact he'd let the dogs wander under the table while we were eating, and they'd drool on ladies' stockings. We couldn't understand how he could endure this. But anyway, you can see from these incidents what a dear friend he was.

I have a beautiful picture of Noel that I keep thinking I should give to the Carmel Valley Manor, the retirement place. Noel's heir sold the estate--farm, I should say--he had down in the Carmel Valley, and it became Carmel Valley Manor. There's his little chapel still there that they kept.

I associate Noel first, however, with San Francisco. Jim and I were living in Berkeley, and I met him in San Francisco, when Mother and Pops were living in San Francisco on Broadway and Taylor. I remember he used to come to dinner in the Broadway house, and of course, we all knew that he was not interested in women sexually, but women all fell in love with him. I used to dream about what a beautiful person Noel was, but we all knew that this was not his interest.

Riess: I am intrigued with a statement like "we all knew."

Caldwell: It was talked about, speculated about, whether he had any particular man as his interest at the time. Never quite knew about that.

Poetry Talk

Riess: In the "Afterword" you say that poetry drew you and your mother together, and that discussions of poetry were an accompaniment to nearly every meal.

Caldwell: I think we need to edit this, because it's not quite accurate. My point is that she brought me up by reading poetry when I was very young, being reminded of a poem by a situation we were in, out in nature, or something of that kind. But at the meal we were simply--Mother and Pops were both working on manuscripts, and that's what was discussed at the meal, their manuscripts. I think it's very important to know that. We didn't just sit down and read poetry at dinner. Not at all.

Riess: How would they discuss their manuscripts at the meal?

Caldwell: Well, one of them might have a question about phraseology, or length of expression or something.

Riess: And they were each other's critics?

Caldwell: Yes, that's right. And my mother always treated me as an adult, however young--I don't mean before I was a teenager, but say from the time of fifteen years old, she always treated me as if my opinion mattered.

But no, that was the thing. They really were revising and editing, sort of, at the dinner table. And it happened frequently. I particularly remember when my mother was writing Barabbas. She did lots of research on that, she got lots of scholarly help on it. That was later, when Jim was a member of our family, and she had so many things she wanted to try out on us, you see.

That's another thing: it was often a matter of asking one of the members of the family what they thought about various portions, whether they should be included, that kind of thing. I'm sure you must understand, as a literary person yourself.

Riess: Many artists and writers labor alone.

Caldwell: Yes, that is perfectly true. A lot of creative people feel that they are diluting their creative energy by discussing the work in progress.

And then sometimes Pops would read us one short poem that he just finished, or something like that.

Riess: And would you feel free to criticize, or say it didn't strike a chord with you?

Caldwell: I would have been more likely to have commented if I liked it. Maybe not said anything if it didn't hit me.

Riess: Always a discreet approach.

Caldwell: No, I'm very outspoken. You ought to ask my doctor [laughs]. Very outspoken. But it was largely either I thought maybe if I were more acquainted with it I'd like it better after a while, or I didn't want to offend--one or the other. About Barabbas, even to this day I do not find it as accessible, as compatible, as Mother's other poems. I find it labored.

I feel so sorry, I never would have wanted her to know how little that poem that meant so much to her to write--she just wrote it from her heart, and I never--. Jim and I--it was very difficult for us, because we didn't want to be negative and critical, but neither of us were attracted to it.

Riess: And she didn't sense that?

Caldwell: I don't think she did. She was very much absorbed in the construction of it and the research on it.

Riess: And that was published in 1932.

Caldwell: Yes.

Riess: Pale Woman?

Caldwell: It seems to me she sent me the proofs of that when I was at Radcliffe. I think that was then. I haven't the chronology very clearly in mind.

Riess: That would make sense, 1927. In reading the proofs would you suggest changes?

Caldwell: Oh, occasionally. I can't remember what they were. I might have, yes. Occasionally I would make suggestions.

That was also true of Genevieve Taggard. She treated me always as an adult about her work, too. I appreciated that. I didn't think about it too much at the time; I just assumed that's the way it was.

Sara and Colonel Wood as a Couple

Riess: When you look back at Sara and Pops, do you think of them as an ideal couple?

Caldwell: Yes, I do, absolutely. Unbelievable. The only time I ever remember Pops being angry at Mother was because she was sneaking--the doctor thought she shouldn't touch coffee, with her colitis, and he found she was drinking some coffee. But that's the only time I've ever known him to explode with anger at her. They had their disagreements on a number of topics, and very, very intense discussions, but there was never any animosity or unresolved feelings, you know. An intense feeling of each one's cause, but no animosity, nothing negative left over from it, no residue.

Riess: Do you think they had some particular insights?

Caldwell: Well, of course, it's particularly surprising on the part of Colonel Wood, because he had had so many affairs, and so many fine people, and he wasn't--. I've often thought, it's interesting, of the men I have known well I have never known any that ever had anything to do with a prostitute! Their early sexual adventures were with people of their own class, so to speak. So when I say he had all these affairs, I didn't mean in a trivial way.

Pops used to laugh and say as a young officer he would be stationed somewhere, in an officer's home, and the wife would sneak into his room and say, "You know, my husband never satisfies me. Can I get in bed with you?" That kind of thing. He was terribly, terribly attractive.

But my point--and this is not as irrelevant to your question as you might have thought--I think that for all he had lots of liaisons with extremely intelligent people--and there was one woman in particular in Portland, also a married woman, a very, very wealthy woman, with whom he used to exchange the most extravagant presents of beautifully-bound, leather-bound books, with wonderful inscriptions--I think that Pops had never had a relationship with a woman that was so fulfilling in so many ways. I think that it was a revelation to him that he could have a relationship like that [which he had with my mother].

He was a lot older then, but he was not old in the way of being attracted to women and women to him, and I think it was a discovery of a kind of completeness of relationship he had never had before. And of course, for Mother, he was just everything

to her. The result was a relationship that just seemed to be almost ideal. I loved being with them. There was a real love and respect and comfortable feeling between them always.

I remember how hard it was on my mother when he was very, very old, and near death. We urged her to have a nurse, but she felt she should not delegate his care to a stranger. I remember once she was overwrought, and said she was cross, and she felt so sorry about it. She felt she had committed the sin of sins to have spoken to him sharply. He was hard to take care of, but I remember how awful she felt that she had ever lost her temper!

My own father, knowing Pops had had so many affairs, felt my mother was just another person to be cast aside. And he didn't want my brother and me to be exposed to the philosophy of a person seemingly so casual about sexual matters. I think that it must have been an absolute amazement to my father that this relationship lasted.

I was unfortunately abroad when my father died. His second wife--I immediately went to stay with her for a few days when I came back. She told me that his dying words were, "Tell Sara I forgive her." I think he must have realized that there was more to the relationship than just a casual sexual attraction. It was a really affinitive thing. While it was hurtful to him that she never came back to him, nevertheless I thought in that statement there was a recognition of a relationship that was more than just a physical one.

Sara's Bout with Colitis, 1923

Riess: In terms of the chronology of this story, we have talked about the trip to Europe, but not fully. Wasn't that precipitated by a need to think about what kind of a life they wanted to lead?

Caldwell: Yes, their original purpose was to become permanent expatriates, not to come back at all. But I think that they didn't like--. Of course, we went to Italy when Mussolini was in control. But Pops had never been abroad. He'd sent his children abroad, but he'd never been. So I think it was partly a desire to see what Italy was like, and maybe for the privacy, I don't know.

Riess: After September 17, 1923, and the fire, you were living in San Francisco. Were plans underway already for the trip?

Caldwell: Oh, no, there's a long time in between there. My mother was very ill. She had this awful colitis. Of course, we now know it was probably psychosomatic--not that that isn't very real. But she had it. A dentist decided that if she had all her teeth removed--there was pus or something at the roots--it would solve it. She went to the hospital and she had all her teeth cut out.

Riess: And in fact her teeth were bad?

Caldwell: Yes. And it didn't do a damn thing about her colitis, but it almost killed her. She was in a coma so that one day the doctor came with a death certificate, expecting her to die that day. And we had a nurse around the clock.

This had nothing to do with the breakdown. But it was then that Pops and I became so very close, so very, very close.

Riess: When you think back, could you have anticipated some crisis in the works?

Caldwell: No, this was a physical thing.

Riess: I know, but you were said that it was probably psychosomatic.

Caldwell: Oh no, no. This is my mature knowledge of medicine and psychology. No. See, my mother was always ailing, in one way or another, and always thought she was going to die. And then she lived to be ninety-two years of age. She always thought she had heart trouble, which she did not have.

In any case, obviously she survived this, and then it was after that that we went to Europe, you see. And meanwhile they had made negotiations about land down in Los Gatos.

Riess: This illness precipitated planning to get out of town?

Caldwell: No, I don't think so. No, the illness was separate; it had no relationship to anything else.

Riess: From that point on, she had false teeth?

Caldwell: Yes, and I was simply horrified. I have a horror to this day, and here I am, eighty-six, with all my own teeth except two! I have taken care of my teeth with tender solicitation.

Also it altered her appearance, you see, because it does kind of cave in your jaw a bit. Her sister, who was very jealous of her, Mary Parton, said, "Erskine doesn't want Sara to

be attractive to other men, and he's decided to have this done to her to deface her."

I was so shocked at this cynical remark. Of course, that was not true at all. He wanted to try to overcome her terrible pain, discomfort over the colitis. Anyway, it didn't do anything about the colitis, and from then on I was just horrified at this idea.

To Italy. January 1924

Riess: When did you go to Europe?

Caldwell: We went in January or February to Italy.

Riess: Was there a lot of planning?

Caldwell: Oh, they planned quite carefully, and must have made investigations about this lovely place we went to.

We took heaven knows how many pieces of baggage with us, and great strong trunks. The idea was that we were going to stay indefinitely.

I don't know where they heard about this lovely place called Cocumela in Sorrento on the Bay of Naples, not very far from Naples. Cocumela was a monastery that had been converted into a pensione, and had a beautiful citrus garden, orchard. It was right on the cliffs overlooking the Bay of Naples. When we went there we went in a motorboat from Naples, and then they came out with rowboats and we stepped into the rowboat and were rowed to shore, and walked up a winding path through the cliff up to this beautiful garden. And there we stayed for some months. Beautiful place.

Riess: Had planning begun for The Cats?

Caldwell: I think they must have bought the land, but I'm unsure exactly whether they had made a firm contract on it or not, or whether they did that later.

Riess: So there was that foothold in America.

Caldwell: Oh, yes, yes. That's true. It sounds so ambivalent, and it was in a way. On the one hand, they had the Los Gatos property in mind; on the other, they had gone for an indefinite time.

They were very happy abroad. We lived in a lovely place. They had a huge room. I had my own room, too, with a balcony looking right off to the Bay of Naples. I used to be so astonished at how they could happily spend many hours in the morning, each of them writing, because I'm not a contemplative person.

It was hard on me in terms of any kind of--I had no organization in my life. I tried hard to find somebody to teach me Italian, but I couldn't find anybody who really was skilled at this. I had a lovely time socially, because there were lots of people and we danced every evening after dinner, and I enjoyed that and went on little excursions. But I had this uneasy feeling I wasn't being educated.

Riess: Was there an itinerary?

Caldwell: No, just as the mood suggested.

Languages

Riess: You said earlier that you were working on languages in a school in Berkeley.

Caldwell: Yes, I wanted to know French, but we went to Italy! And then I felt I shouldn't learn Italian, that it would spoil my French!

The first word I learned in Italian was "thief," because I discovered that the taxi driver, horse-and-buggy driver, had advanced the meter beyond the legal standards and put his coat over it. I saw he was overcharging them. So "Ladro!" I would say, "Thief!" If I'd been a man, he would have knocked me flat, but as a young woman he couldn't do that. [laughs] I learned enough Italian to communicate. Very ungrammatically.

Riess: Languages, was that what the school specialized in?

Caldwell: Oh, no. They didn't specialize in language, they just had very fine teachers, and classes of two and three. They had a man who was a T.A. at Berkeley, or maybe even assistant professor, who needed to pick up a little more money. They had wonderful teachers. And I learned French idioms--.

I never learned to pronounce French properly. I had quite good training at Berkeley High School, but my teacher was getting a Ph.D. at Stanford, and was American. And the woman in

the private school was German. So I never really was exposed to a bona fide French accent. But I learned my idioms from that German woman, which have stood me in good stead.

When I was at Radcliffe you had to have a reading knowledge of French and German to graduate. They had an exam once a year that you could take--you could take it any year. And it wasn't a matter of being graded: you passed or failed. I went in one time, and I thought I hadn't done well and didn't want to turn the paper in. They made me do it, and I passed it, and I hadn't looked at French since I was in high school. That was really quite good, I thought. But really, I had wonderful teachers at Berkeley High School.

Seeing Art. and Life. in Europe with Pops

Riess: Europe was your real introduction to art?

Caldwell: No, my introduction to art was at the Art Institute in Chicago, and with Pops. I used to go [with him] in San Francisco to the market; he loved to go to the vegetable and fruit markets. And he'd say, "Oh, now you see that fruit, it looks just the way Manet would paint it," and so on. No, I got my interest in art as such, over and above representation, from my conversations with Pops, and the beautiful works of art in the house, the Ryder in the living room, Twachtman's "Harbor Scene" in the master bedroom, a still-life by Hassam in the dining room.

Not that everyone takes to it. I notice it with my own son and daughter. My daughter was very responsive to art, and my son has no art discrimination. He was more interested in music and knows much more about music than any of us in the family. That was the art that he responded to. But visually, no. And they both grew up in the same environment.

Pops would talk about Ryder, for example. I just loved Albert Pinkham Ryder, the great American painter, from the time I was in my teens, because here were these beautiful pictures in the house that he talked about. So I looked at pictures not as representation, but as an expression of a great creativity. The idea was that a work of art was something that you tried to look at through the eyes of the artist, not from the point of view of representation.

To my great joy Pops gave me a Ryder painting, "The Lorelei." The whole family, Jim, Sara and Dan, responded to the

magic of that picture. It is now in a private collection in New York City.

But not until I got to college did I take any courses in the history of art. Until then my art education had been very haphazard. Because Pops liked the Impressionists I was much more aware of them, and then if you're in Italy, the Italian Renaissance.

Also he was crazy about Greek art, and I remember going to the National Gallery in Rome with him, and his pointing out how beautifully sculptural their feet were, because they weren't confined in ugly shoes. I looked at feet in quite a different way. I had thought they were ugly, sort of smelly things, and here they were, these beautiful sculptures.

Riess: He sounds like a wonderful eye-opener.

Caldwell: Well, you see, he enjoyed what he was doing, no matter what it was. He was absorbed. Nowadays, that's what the Zen people urge, that you live in the moment. He had that extraordinary ability to enjoy whatever he was doing. So that when this awful news came about the IRS, I had never seen him so depressed, you see, and he was the most positive and affirmative person.

Riess: You were in Sorrento for the winter and the spring?

Caldwell: I'd have to figure the exact chronology, because we did then do some traveling. They went down to Sicily to see the Greek plays, and Mother tells a lot about that in her oral history.

I wasn't interested in Greek plays, and it seemed to me if I were going to be educated I had to go back to Rome. So it was arranged that I would go /back and stay at a French convent not far from the Spanish Steps. The nuns were distressed by my failure to genuflect and to make the sign of the cross, and although I tried to conceal my agnosticism, each morning a nun would kneel by my bed in prayer.

I made all the arrangements for Mother and Pops's hotel in Rome when they came back from Sicily. I really and truly was very competent, much better than I am now. The idea now of traveling alone is just unthinkable. Well, that's partly because of my dependence on a cane and so on. I was very self-confident; it never occurred to me I couldn't handle any situation.

What I did in Rome was to simply sight-see, which was difficult as a young woman alone because I would be pursued like

an animal. I remember once just running, with a man running after me, and grabbing a cab--only the cab was a carozza, not a motor vehicle.

I knew a young man who was at the American Academy in Rome who was an American, and I got an elderly--I couldn't get out of the convent at night, you know, without some kind of chaperonage, so I somehow or other got hold of an old woman who would come and get me out, and then I'd meet this man from the American Academy. It was never a romance, but just such a nice friendship.

Riess: You must really enjoy the Henry James novels of that world.

Caldwell: Yes, I do. I've just been reading The Golden Bowl.

Riess: Anyway then, after that, you had to go home.

Caldwell: I'm not sure where we were when we heard. It seems to me the news came to us in Sorrento, but I may be wrong about that, because we stayed abroad and we went to Rome, and we went to Venice, and also to Paris and London, briefly.

I have some pewter plates downstairs in this house that we bought, and as we were getting out of the gondola they were dropped in the canal, and a diver went and got them. I think probably they were dropped on purpose so the diver could be paid to retrieve them--I don't know. But I still have those pewter plates. And I remember going again on art tours with Pops in Venice.

Riess: Sara would stay home on those art tours?

Caldwell: I don't ever remember her going with us. Not that she didn't like art; she did. But my energy was boundless. It's pretty much that way now, except that because of my arthritis I don't get around as well. But my energy level is high. Her energy level was really quite low. I think she'd also rather stay home and read a book.

Paris: Frugality, Ezra Pound, Ulysses

Riess: You went with them to Paris?

Caldwell: Yes, we went to Paris, and we went to London, too, but we stayed a little bit longer in Paris. I wanted very much to learn

French, and I stayed in a school for a couple of weeks. Anyway, we stayed there for a short time.

Pops always wanted to stay in these awful inns. When we went to Sicily we stayed in the most horrible place, and we got sick because of it. Pops would say, "Why waste your money?" He was so extravagant in other ways, but, "Why waste your money on shelter?" He'd spend heaven-knows-what at a restaurant, but he thought a good hotel was a waste of money--the only suggestion of frugality I ever knew on his part.

Riess: In Paris in the twenties--did you meet famous people?

Caldwell: The first time I heard of Ulysses was when we visited Ezra Pound. Ezra Pound was very much an admirer of Joyce. Anyway, when we went to see Pound, I realized he was a very important man. What I remember--and Mother didn't remember it much at all--he sat at a table at a level above us, almost like a court room. I was so impressed! He talked down to us, literally!

That's all I remember, and the mention of Ulysses. And then when I heard that it [Ulysses] was not acceptable in the United States, I thought, "Mm, I'll put one in the bottom of my trunk," and I did. I didn't read it until much later, interestingly enough. You would have thought, considering the freedom of sexual reference, that I would, but I just loved the idea of doing something to outwit the censors.

I didn't approve, you see. I didn't approve of the government--because of the ideas I was exposed to--censoring it. It was not because it was a pornographic book, but it was because the government shouldn't be doing this. They should let people read what they want. That was the motivation. Very serious--I was a very serious person. [laughs]

Riess: Did Pops know that you had the book?

Caldwell: I don't know that they knew or not. I remember putting it in the very bottom, with underwear above and below. And they couldn't very well go through a steamer trunk, you know. I have that trunk down in this basement, by the way, I'm trying to sell it second-hand now and get it out of my basement.

Riess: And do you still have that edition of Ulysses?

Caldwell: No, I don't. I have a Ulysses, but not that one. I don't even know what happened to it; I must have given it to someone.

Riess: So those are your recollections of Pound?

Caldwell: Just this man. I thought it was humorous, and I was not impressed with the majesty. I thought this was an astonishing way to receive guests.

Riess: Were they visiting him because of connections in the poetry world, or the political world?

Caldwell: I don't know. She [Sara Bard Field] speaks of having very little memory of it. Because I wanted to talk to you about my remembrance of it, I read what she had to say. And [there was] very little about Paris.

And she doesn't mention this Bill Somebody-or-other who was the official, very much interested in the Soviet Union, in our foreign service, a man who impressed me because he was well-dressed and intelligent and a man of the world. I think we had dinner in their beautiful apartment. Either that or we went to the apartment after having dinner at a restaurant. Although I don't remember going to restaurants in Paris at all.

Riess: Were Gertrude Stein, or Leo Stein, connections in Paris?

Caldwell: No, not at all, interestingly enough. Well, Pops wouldn't have liked Picasso or Braque. He just hated that, just the way I feel now about what's going on [in art], just can't understand such--it was ugly.

Riess: Did you go to galleries?

Caldwell: I only remember going to the Louvre, with Pops. Did I tell you about "The Man with the Glove," the Titian?

Riess: No.

Caldwell: Well, we were wandering around, and I was crazy about Titian, I had gotten acquainted with his work in Rome. We were in front of this picture--I have a photograph of it somewhere, I can't put my hand on it now--and he said, "See this beautiful young man in the velvet jacket with a lace collar and cuffs? But look at his gloves. His glove is torn. If you're an aristocrat, it doesn't matter if your glove is torn." [laughter] This was the wonderful combination Pops had of rich, sensuous enjoyment, along with the political--economic, I should say.

Discoveries in a Diary, 1923

- Caldwell: There are two trips to Washington--this is what I have discovered. There was the trip when I was fifteen, the one I described before, in 1921. And here's another one, in 1923, prior to the trip to Europe. I went first to Chicago, and then to Washington, and then Mother and Pops came on to Washington. This is all described in a diary that I recently found]. Then we went to New York to take the ship, and then abroad. The chronology is there. It tells exactly when we sailed, and so on.
- Riess: Are there wonderful things to read into the oral history from the diary?
- Caldwell: No, no, it's very prosaic, just factual, just what we did, you know. Even here: "Sea calm." [laughs] We sailed on 10th of January, 1924.
- Riess: I can't believe it is all prosaic. Didn't you have a shipboard romance?
- Caldwell: Oh, well, there was a young man, but I was too young for him. A charming Italian who flirted with me, and I just thought that was marvelous--as we entered the Bay of Naples. He sang an Italian song. But I was much too young for this sophisticated young Italian.
- Riess: Who did you see in Chicago on that second trip?
- Caldwell: Well, here it is. "I left the Oakland pier," it says, "at 11:30, alone. Mother and Pops said goodbye in San Francisco." And then I describe the dreary, barren lands that we passed through. Then "I went to the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago and had dinner with Lyd[ia] and Bob Minor." They were extremely radical friends of my mother and stepfather's.
- "I went to a number of museums and had lunch at Marshall Field's with Mrs. Van Volkenburg." (That was Mrs. Maurice Browne.) And went to the Art Institute. "Many Corot and Whistler pictures." "Accompanied by Margaret Johannsen." By the way, her husband was an extremely radical labor leader who was involved in the McNamara case--not involved in the case itself, but he was there as an observer of the trial.
- "Went lobbying with Anita Pulitzer for the Lucretia Mott amendment." "Miss Salas from the Philippine Islands suffrage movement dined with us."

Surely you don't want all this!

And then "Mother and Pops arrived from Chicago"--that would be December 24th, 1923. "Celebrated Christmas there...went to Freer Gallery." And "went to Senator La Follette's house." Phil La Follette. "Phil La Follette's wife said she'd try to get me a Wisconsin room." (By this time it was decided I would be going to the University of Wisconsin.)

Riess: And that is different, because earlier you described yourself still deciding, when you were in Europe, whether or not to go to the Sorbonne.

Caldwell: Yes, that's true. But fundamentally I wanted to return to the USA with Mother and Pops.

"We lunched with Mrs. Eugene Meyer, and went to the Corcoran Art Gallery."

Riess: Whose connection was Eugene Meyer?

Caldwell: That was Pops's, definitely.

Then "We left Washington, arrived in Baltimore, Maryland, and we went to see Pops's old home, nearby." And we went to Doris Stevens and Dudley Malone's for dinner. They were very prominent in politics and in the suffrage movement too.

Riess: Did you really participate in all of this, or were you just little Kay?

Caldwell: I felt pretty much myself. I was quite grown-up. And the things we did were all adult activities. We went to see "Cyrano de Bergerac" in the evening.

This I think was kind of amusing: "Saw Mrs. Blumenthal's home (palace)." She was a tremendously wealthy person. "Dinner with Zona Gale"--she was a famous novelist at the time. "Dined with the La Follettes at the Waldorf."

But you see, these are just factual things, not any comment really, except the parenthetical comment about Mrs. Blumenthal's house.

Riess: Further on, are there reflections on your decision about college?

Caldwell: Not anything. I was impressed with the fact that there are no reflections. These are all factual records of what we did and where we were.

Riess: You were impressed that you were so disinclined to make comment.

Caldwell: Yes, I wondered about that as I read this over. I never referred ever to any of my feelings. There is no really personal note about it at all. Completely objective. Now, whether that's suppression--I'm not sure.

For example, here we are at the Cocumela, this marvelous monastery converted to a pensione where we stayed for quite a number of months. And I can remember the things I did there: a group of American art students, and what fun I had with them, but no mention of that at all. I was marooned with these young men on the island of Capri, we couldn't get back on account of a storm, and we danced at the hotel, and I remember that I was the only one that had traveler's checks and temporarily financed everybody. Characteristic--I've always been so anxious to have economic security.

I was a frightfully, frightfully good little girl. My father filled me with the fear of God about pregnancy. In those days one did not sleep with somebody at the drop of a hat, you know. And the journal, it just says "Cocumela," "Cocumela," "Cocumela," each day, without any comment. My memories of it are all in my head, not on paper.

I describe the motor trip we took up and down the coast of Italy, and going to Sicily. Now there was a most interesting thing that happened in Sicily. I had a proposal of marriage from a student I met casually on a stroll in Taormina. It was most amusing. I talk about the places we had gone to, the famous Greek temples there, but it was extraordinary that I said nothing here about that young man--he practically jumped out of the bushes when I was walking early in the morning to go see Mount Etna. But I didn't say a word in this journal!

Riess: [Riess reading diary.] "Walked the streets in the afternoon. Many Titians, Van Dycks, Rafaels." "Left London, arrived Paris." "Paris," "Paris," "Paris," "Paris."

September 13, 1924. "Left New York and my darling family at 12:50." "Arrived Chicago, went to Art Institute, and had lunch with Nelly [Ellen] Van Volkenburg." September 16, 1924. "Arrived in Madison. Came on 8:15 a.m. from Chicago. Homer [Johannsen] saw me off." "Looking around Madison. Spent night with Isabel La Follette."

Caldwell: Isabel [Belle Case] La Follette was the wife of the senator.

Riess: "Registration began." "Dad arrived in afternoon."

Caldwell: My father. I didn't remember he had come there. But it was Colonel Wood who financed my college education from beginning to end.

Riess: "Registration continued. Sorority teas. Mostly out-of-town girls. In morning drove around Lake Mendota with Dad. And then Dad left for the West."

Caldwell: It's so dull. It just doesn't expression any personal reactions at all.

IV COLLEGE YEARS

College Choice

Riess: Was there any thought of leaving you behind when they returned?

Caldwell: Oh, no, no, I didn't want to be that far away from them. And in those days there were no airplanes, and no picking up the phone and in a few minutes being in touch. I wouldn't have been afraid to stay; I just chose not to.

Interesting you should ask that. I think there was an option, but there's where my timidity came in. I would not want to stay on. But the question was, where to go to college. As I mentioned, in those days you could not graduate from a California high school and pass the College Board Examinations for an Eastern college. No possibility. I did think at one time I wanted to go to Stanford, but I didn't make it. They only took five hundred women at that time. So then, what to do?

Well, Mrs. La Follette, the wife of Robert M. La Follette [senator from Wisconsin, 1906-1925], was among Mother's Women's Party pals. And the University of Wisconsin then was in the forefront of liberal political and educational thought, as now Berkeley has been for so many years. It was one of the leading state universities--it's still an excellent university, but it was innovative then. They had Alexander Meiklejohn, with whom I became very well acquainted, and for which reason I majored in philosophy when I went to Harvard.

So anyway, I had two years at Wisconsin, and it was through the La Follettes that I met the man I married, because Jim Caldwell was a roommate in college with the to-be-governor of Wisconsin, who was a La Follette [Philip Fox La Follette]. I was given a letter of introduction and went to a house-party, and I met Jim.

Riess: Did you consider Wellesley, or Vassar, after tutoring?

Caldwell: Well, there wasn't much money spent on my education on the part of my beloved Mother and Pops until I got to college. All of Colonel Woods's children, his grandchildren, went to the Katherine Branson School in Marin County. There was never any consideration that I should go to any but a public school.

Riess: And the University of California was ruled out?

Caldwell: That was because of my unpleasant memories of Berkeley as a child, because of my unhappy situation--it had nothing to do with UC Berkeley. I didn't ever want to see Berkeley again, really. I just wanted to write Berkeley off. I wouldn't want it to be thought for a moment that it had anything to do with the quality of the university, but my childhood here was very unhappy, so Berkeley did not mean peace of mind.

Wisconsin, and Alexander Meiklejohn

Riess: College is a time to get away from home.

Caldwell: I do feel that quite strongly, yes. I think that's a good idea, to make a change. And also Wisconsin had the same reputation for liberality, both politically and educationally, that Berkeley has had for so many years. It was the public institution that had a reputation for innovation and quality.

Riess: The experimental college had started.

Caldwell: That's right, Mr. Meiklejohn's. I knew Meiklejohn because Mother and Pops knew him, so I had a personal introduction to him. I took his course, and when I transferred to Radcliffe I majored in philosophy, just because of my exposure to Mr. Meiklejohn at Wisconsin.

Riess: His course in philosophy was taught in the experimental college?

Caldwell: No, it was part of the regular college. I was not in the experimental college. It was one class, one course. I only took my first two years there, so I was not obliged to declare a major. I was just taking things here and there, and having a terrible time deciding on a major.

I was very much thrown in my choice of a major by knowing Meiklejohn. He believed, you see, that professors and students

should study together by taking up a topic that the professor himself was beginning to inform himself about. He thought that was part of the educating process. And he was crazy about Greek philosophy. So he chose classical Greek civilization.

Here I had been in Italy, and loved Italian culture, and I was completely confused about what I wanted to zero in on as a specialty. It was very dismaying to me, because presumably if you went in for Greek classical civilization then you studied the language, and as a college student to begin a language would have been so time-consuming.

Riess: Was that his philosophy or the experimental college philosophy?

Caldwell: You mean choosing the Greek?

Riess: Was that how the experimental college worked?

Caldwell: As I heard him discuss it then, it was a question of professors and students learning together. Of course, the advantage--this is my comment on it--the advantage would be that the professor would have had research methods and a much wider culture and deeper one than the students. But the idea of the enthusiasm and the excitement of sharing the learning process, whatever it was--he just happened to zero in on the classical civilization.

Riess: Well, what did you learn those first two years?

Caldwell: What did I get out of that? I would say the most impressive academic experience was Meiklejohn. And I met Jim there, you see, so that also was very, very distracting for my scholarly interests. I was much more focussed on Jim than on my studies!

Meeting James Caldwell: Friends at Wisconsin

Caldwell: I lived in a sorority, Kappa Alpha Theta, I belonged to that. Amusingly enough, many of the women that have been my friends in later life, and have gone to different institutions, if they have been sorority women it was always that particular one. I never could quite figure that out.

I think I mentioned I met Jim at the La Follette ranch. And at the same time I met John Fairbank, who became such a great scholar in Chinese history, the greatest authority on modern Chinese history of our time.

Jim was a little bit older. The other men who became so distinguished that I met at that same time were in my advanced freshman English class. We were exactly the same age, and we were freshmen, so I did see something of them. But Jim made a great impression on me. It was very distracting to my scholarly life, and the dean of women greatly disapproved of my friendship with Jim, for a freshman. See, Jim was an instructor in the English department.

Riess: And it was noted that you were dating him.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. Remember, it wasn't a huge, enormous community like this one. It was a much smaller student body then, so everybody knew everybody else.

Riess: He had gotten a B.A. from Princeton.

Caldwell: Yes, he was studying for his master's at the University of Wisconsin. And of course, you see, his whole social circle was a faculty one, much older people. He was only six years older, but still, at that age to be a freshman or to be a graduate student made a great difference.

But I was so accustomed to being with adults all of my life that this attracted me much more than these other young men that turned out to be so brilliant, and whom I liked. Jim's whole milieu and entourage--whatever you want to call it--his whole gang, to put it more simply, was more of the kind of conversation and sophistication of conversation I was used to. But of course, I was nevertheless a rather naive, enthusiastic freshman, both of those things.

I'll never forget my stepfather, before we left Paris, had some dresses made for me at a very, very well-known place in Paris. And I didn't have a lot of clothes, but what I had were very, very inappropriate for college. My roommate, whom I still know--she lives down in San Luis Obispo--my first roommate there was very scornful of my having lived in Paris. In those days, people didn't travel the way they do.

Riess: Scornful?

Caldwell: I was very, very much looked down upon, socially, as elitist and superior, you know. I might have been a pain in the neck too, you know. But on the other hand, I was awfully naive about people; very, very naive and spontaneous. I didn't have devious plans. It astonished me to see how the students, my contemporaries, my peers, would decide they wanted to, so to

speaking, "get" a certain young man's attention, and go after him. I couldn't imagine making overtures to a man.

To this day, I'm very reticent about treating men in any kind of flirtatious way. I mean, that must sound silly at my age, but I've always been very reticent about being femininely flirtatious with men. Always was defensive. I always greatly enjoyed the men I knew as a freshman there. I dated these other men that I thought were so much fun.

I don't think I told you about the way I saw some more of the people my own age and class at the University of Wisconsin. When you first entered the English class, they had you write an essay. Those they felt were superior were put into an advanced English class. So that's how I happened to be in class with these very bright people of my own generation. I was very fortunate. It wasn't just through Jim and his far more sophisticated associates--I mean, I did meet very interesting people my own age, and they turned out to have made quite considerable contributions to their various fields.

Riess: Who were they, beside Fairbank?

Caldwell: Well, John Fairbank the most, and Clyde Kluckhohn, who was an anthropologist studying the American Indian. He turned out to be very, very unhappy, and I think committed suicide.

Riess: Were people there aware of Sara?

Caldwell: Only the La Follette family and their friends. So when I saw more of Jim, of course, they all knew who they were.

Riess: But as a freshman, you were anonymous?

Caldwell: I would say yes, among my peers. Yes, Fairbank and the others had no idea, and I didn't mention them. I mean, after all.

Riess: This, I should think, would have been the greatest thing about Wisconsin for you, was anonymity, in some way. What do you think about that? Or did you miss the Russian Hill life?

Caldwell: One reason I think I was so attracted to Jim and his circle was that was much more the kind of atmosphere I had been used to always. Even in high school--I think I told you before--I preferred the few men I knew who were older and in college.

Riess: You didn't take college as an opportunity to become a new person.

Caldwell: No, I don't think so. But I've always been, for all that--this might make my daughter laugh--but I've always been socially very, very self-conscious and timid, and fearful.

Riess: And your daughter wouldn't see you that way?

Caldwell: No. [laughs] She sees me as her mother giving these little dinner parties, and lecturing to huge groups of people, and so on.

Riess: I believe that one can be both of those people. It's a little hard to convince others. You said that your mother had had a little talk with you about early marriage. Can you remember that?

Caldwell: No, not at all.

Riess: Well, she says in her oral history that she had a little talk with Kay about avoiding early marriage.

Caldwell: Oh, they didn't want me to be married before I got out of college. I think that was the idea.

Riess: I see. All right, so you had met Jim.

Caldwell: Yes, and the environment that he lived in, the fact that he was older and in a more sophisticated environment than my undergraduate friends, enhanced the pleasure of his company and the whole world he lived in.

Riess: What did sophistication mean?

Caldwell: Well, we did not live together, if that is what you're trying to ask. And actually--. People in those days would have concealed it if they had, so I may be naive in thinking that not as many people were likely to do this than actually happened.

But remember, my father was a Baptist minister, and he took me when I was about thirteen years old and showed me a home in Oakland for "fallen" women, women who had been taken advantage of by men, that had fallen in love with them and had become pregnant and had an illegitimate child. This was for women who were being housed through pregnancy and birth. And this made a terrible impression on me.

Even if you felt perfectly confident about a man, it seemed to me you had to be very, very sure that you weren't taken advantage of. But this wasn't anything I thought, it was a reaction, an utterly unconscious reaction. And I think that my

father damaged--. He didn't mean to, but he made me more fearful about men than he ever would have intended to do.

Riess: This sense that they would take advantage.

Caldwell: Yes, and women should always be wary, and it was a terrible thing to have an illegitimate child. It's a disgrace of disgraces.

Interestingly enough, my mother and stepfather of course were living together in this utterly unconventional way, and not accepted by society at large in that time at all. But that was special, and they loved each other. The confidence between them was so apparent.

Jim. and Sara and Colonel Wood

Caldwell: Jim then--this is awfully amusing--of course couldn't help but hear an awful lot from me about my mother and Colonel Wood. And when Colonel Wood heard that Jim was a smoker, he just hit the ceiling. He wrote a famous letter--remember, they hadn't met yet and Jim was, what, twenty-six--and my stepfather wrote him a letter about the terrible evils of smoking, in which he enclosed--it's fascinating, and the letter exists today--enclosed a letter from a doctor in San Francisco who pointed out it was even bad for your heart. Now, that hasn't been brought up in public as public knowledge until our own time.

Jim was furious. The idea of someone telling him how he should live. And those were the days when young men seemed to proclaim their maturity with smoking a cigarette, you know. Little tunes like "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, if the Camels don't get you, the Fatimas must." And really saying they'll kill you, but thinking it was funny, you see. It made a great impression on me. Obviously my Baptist father wouldn't smoke, but Pops and Mother felt very strongly about the bad physical effects of smoking. So I was brought up to feel that strongly.

Riess: That's extraordinary, that he would put pen to paper with this.

Caldwell: With somebody I was interested in? Oh, he certainly would. He treated me like his own, you see.

Jim was just furious about this. But in the course of time he wanted to meet them, and they wanted to meet him. He got

a--maybe even arranged through Ben [Lehman] for all I know--oh, no, it was Noel Sullivan who as a Catholic was very much involved in the San Rafael girls college, Dominican, and Jim was offered a summer job teaching there, and that's what paid his way to California.

Riess: That was after your freshman year?

Caldwell: Yes.

I met Jim with their car, Pops and Mother's car, at the railroad train. Then he was so nervous about meeting Mother and Colonel Wood that he wanted a tour of San Francisco, anything but to get down to Los Gatos for that great confrontation. We finally got down there, and whether it was a late lunch or an early dinner I don't know, but it was a meal that Mary had made. They [the Marengos] were very interested too, because they loved me and I loved them--they were the people that worked for them.

Pops's youngest daughter was there, Lisa Wood Smith, one of the most wonderful human beings you could ever know, and she made everybody feel comfortable. Jim was put next to her at the table, and he'll never forget, the way she treated him just made him feel completely at home. She just looked at him with her beautiful, warm brown eyes and said, "Jim, it's so nice to have you here." Well, now, anybody can say that, but it was how she said it, from the heart, and looking him straight in the eyes. Then he just relaxed and felt fine. So I've always been so grateful to her. [laughs] She's a wonderful person.

Riess: But you sensed that there would be rapport.

Caldwell: Oh, yes, absolutely. Oh, I knew they all would become devoted to one another, which indeed they were. I couldn't possibly--I said that, I think, in my "Afterword"--I couldn't have married anyone that could have been more congenial with my family. And he convinced them that with my love of learning I should go to an Eastern college. So that's how I happened to. He said, "The University of Wisconsin is just fine, but she really ought to have the experience of an Eastern college."

Well, there were so many people that wanted to transfer, you had to have influence in addition to your academic record. So Pops knew a great lawyer in Boston named Morfield Storey, a great, great man of his day, and Morfield Storey, who of course had never seen me, but admired Colonel Wood, wrote a letter in my favor. I'm sure it was the most influential factor in my having gotten into Radcliffe. Anyway, that's how I got in. Of course, you had to have a certain grade average naturally, but

then there were so many other people who had equally good grade averages, so you had to have something else. That's true today, that's true anywhere.

Radcliffe Studies, A.N. Whitehead, and Others

Caldwell: I entered Radcliffe in my junior year.

Riess: Did you live on campus?

Caldwell: No, I didn't want to. I had not enjoyed living in a sorority, so I did not want to live in a dormitory. There was a charming woman named Cornelia Green, a spinster. She had a lovely house, English furniture, and because she was elderly and couldn't do any of the housework or cooking, that is how she spent the money--this I figured out--that we paid her, and she had not only a cook but a second maid. There were three students living there.

I had an awfully nice room with a fireplace that the other girls of course shared, at my invitation. That was my first year there. I can't remember why, whether she stopped doing this--I mean, Miss Green--stopped having Radcliffe girls or not, but I lived in two other private houses during the time I was at Radcliffe. Never anything so enjoyable as this one.

Riess: Did Radcliffe have the great sense of being among women, sort of intensely female?

Caldwell: Well, it was a new experience for me, because I was so used to co-education. I don't know whether I can answer that question, because I was very much aware, even to this day, of what a difference there is in your social judgments of a college if you come in from the beginning or come in as a transfer student. I never felt as identified as I might have.

I was very grateful for having gone there, because I had never met, encountered, such high academic standards in my whole life. And actually, I didn't know--I majored in philosophy, and I didn't know whether I could make it academically that first year. I had Alfred North Whitehead as a professor, and I had Etienne Gilson from the Sorbonne.

The arrangement was--you see, there is no such thing as a Radcliffe faculty, you know, it's all Harvard faculty. You can either, with the consent of the professor, have all your courses in the Harvard Yard co-educationally, or, if the professor does

not want women in his classes, he was obliged to repeat the course at Radcliffe, which means the enrollment would be very small, and he's also paid doubly. That's a great inducement, because of course he gets double pay. But anyway, so I had a course with Whitehead in a class of five, that great man.

As far as Gilson was concerned, we tried to show-- We felt insecure as Radcliffe students vis-a-vis the men at Harvard, so we tried to assume a great superiority, and one of them was to petition Professor Gilson to lecture to us in French instead of English. "Of course, those Harvard men, they wouldn't be up to that kind of thing." You know, that's the kind of stance we took.

Riess: Did you take your lectures in French from him?

Caldwell: Some of them. I think he was told by the administration he shouldn't any more. The Harvard authorities cracked down on Gilson because he didn't believe in giving examinations by offering questions that the students hadn't been alerted about. He would say before the exam, "Here are five topics. Two of these will be your examination topics." We thought that was wonderful, of course, but we had to take them all over again, because Harvard didn't like that idea.

Riess: I don't know that name, Gilson.

Caldwell: Etienne Gilson. Well, he was a great man in logic. He was from the Sorbonne.

And Whitehead was just charming. He and his wife even invited their undergraduates to their soirees. I think it was every month, in the evening, they invited students into their apartment.

Riess: Did you have a sense that you were getting a slightly watered-down version of what they were getting at Harvard?

Caldwell: Never, never, never. Not ever. But of course, Whitehead was impossible for us really to understand.

Then all of a sudden a woman from England came and everybody acknowledged she was the only one in Cambridge who really understood Whitehead. Dorothy Emmett her name was, and she eventually went back to a university in England as a professor, specializing in Whitehead. She was an amazing woman. I had never met anyone like her, and of course I was in awe of her knowledge.

We all had to do so much studying that we only--this was true generally, as far as I know--only went out one night a week, socially. Saturday night, we went to the Boston Symphony. I used to see a lot of John Fairbank when I transferred there, even though I was in love with Jim. But he was back in Wisconsin, and I had my social life--and he did too. [laughs] Clyde Kluckholm and John Fairbank had both transferred to Harvard.

Riess: Jim was still in Wisconsin at this point?

Caldwell: Yes. That's right, that first year.

Riess: Philosophy is such a difficult field of study. I think you feel you'll never get your head above water.

Caldwell: Well, I regret having majored in it, really. I would rather I had majored in history, or history of art maybe, as an undergraduate. But my memory has always been terrible for dates, and one of the reasons I enjoyed philosophy is because it was sequential in thought and didn't depend on either historical facts or dates so much. I think that was influential in my doing it.

Anyway, these great men were wonderful to be with. But Whitehead one time said, "Well, Miss Ehr Gott, did you understand today's lecture?" I said, "Some of it, Professor Whitehead." And he told me this delicious joke. "Well," he said, "it's like the bishop's egg. His hostess asked him if he enjoyed his breakfast egg, and he said, 'Parts of it.'" [laughter] I've never forgotten the humiliation. My face just flushed red.

Troubled Tutors

Caldwell: I had two very, very distressing experiences there that had nothing to do with me.

They had the tutorial system, and my first tutor, who was always immaculately groomed--this is important to know for what happens later--polished shoes and a white handkerchief in the pocket, and creased pants, and he was the only professor I knew who mentioned his wife ever in his lectures, he was infatuated with his wife. All of a sudden he discovered that she was having an affair with one of his graduate students, and he had a nervous breakdown. He suddenly became disheveled, and took on drinking.

(At that time, interestingly enough, two things you couldn't do as a professor at Harvard was drink with your students or be homosexual. Santayana, the great aesthetician, was fired from Harvard because he was homosexual. Those were different days. I unfortunately didn't have a chance to study with Santayana for that reason. He was before my time there.)

Anyway, this tutor of mine was then very intelligently dealt with by Harvard. Instead of firing him, they sent him off to be psychoanalyzed by Jung. But unfortunately, he committed suicide. He cut his wrists with a razor blade. That was kind of traumatizing.

My second tutor, Dumas, also had a nervous breakdown.

Riess: What was his name?

Caldwell: His name was Raphael Dumas. It's funny, I'm blocking right now on the other man's name. I thought I'd never forget it. It will come to me at some point.

Anyhow, Dumas was a bachelor, and absolutely devoted to the book he was writing on Plato. His nervous breakdown was not caused by affairs of the heart. He took forever to get this book finished, so when anybody met him, instead of saying, "Do you think it's going to rain," or "Where are you going on vacation," they'd say, "How's the book coming?" And he just cracked up because he hadn't finished this book.

Well, he also went off to Jung and came back, and he was a great success. He eventually, even though quite young in middle age, married and lived happily ever after, unlike the other man.

Riess: I think Henriette Lehman was another who went to see Jung.

Caldwell: Oh, yes, they had a whole cult here of people--. And they never broke the umbilical cord with Jung, Jungian philosophy, they all got together, and it was kind of a joke in Berkeley.

Riess: Why Jung? Why do you think?

Caldwell: I don't know. I was just told this. But I knew they were psychoanalyzed, and Harvard was very glad to [see to that]. At the time I thought that was very, very intelligent, but still it was a terrible jolt to have these two tutors--.

You see, in those days either because of the finances or the population the enrollment was small enough so that you

actually did have a tutor one to one. I think later on they weren't able to afford to do that. And you got acquainted with them--. Ralph-something was the name of the first man; I can't think of his last name at the moment. Anyway.

Issues of Feminism, and Westernness

Caldwell: There was something else I wanted to say about Dorothy Emmett. I was so impressed with her knowledge and her training and her wonderful education. Her life was so disciplined that if you wanted to have tea with her you had to make a date maybe a month ahead.

Finally when the great moment came when I could have tea with Dorothy Emmett I asked her about her education, and she remarked that she had had ten years of Latin. I was just shocked. Ten years of Latin! Good heavens! "Oh," she said, "I can't imagine life without it." [laughter]

Riess: How old was she?

Caldwell: She was still a young woman, I suppose she was in her thirties. But she seemed to us at age twenty-three as much older.

I was then so aware of the difference between British and American education. I remember thinking, good heavens, I've had two years of Latin, and I thought that was quite enough.

Riess: Did you meet any women--maybe Dorothy Emmett counts as one--who then became role models?

Caldwell: No, except that we were so proud of the fact that a woman had had this great distinction about understanding Whitehead.

See, as Radcliffe women we were not feminists in the sense of resenting the fact that we didn't have the same privileges at Harvard that the men had. For example, we could not use the stacks at the Widener Library, and this was humiliating. There was a little room you had to go to, and you had, in the most circuitous way, to find your books.

But we didn't resent it, because we were told when we came there that we didn't have privileges, but rather we were granted advantages. And this was true. I mean, it was a private college, it was not a state university. So we accepted this.

It was interesting that the women students were very frustrated when they couldn't take a course. There were professors at Harvard who both forbade women to enter their classes and did not repeat the class, I think. I'm not quite sure of that. I may be wrong.

In any case, what I wanted to mention now is that there was an anthropology class where the students were about to go on a dig somewhere, out of the country, but it was unthinkable that the women would go. What would you do about toilets? What would you do about sleeping arrangements? And so on. There was one girl who was very brilliant. She wasn't angry about this, but she simply had to go on this trip, professionally. So she quietly researched, found out what every student was specializing in, and discovered there was one very important aspect of this project that had been neglected.

Without saying a word she became utterly skilled and proficient in this particular area, and they had to take her. That's the kind of thing women did. But I don't remember anyone taking the feminist attitude, "This is unfair." I think if this had been a public institution there would have been a whole different story, but we were told in the beginning that we had privileges, but not rights, at Harvard.

Riess: You were among women with goals that were more than home and family?

Caldwell: Well, I suppose so. The ones in Miss Green's house where I first lived, I liked them very much. But they teased me as a Westerner. They thought that for Westerners everything had to be very large, and one time as a joke they got some enormous grapefruit, and put on them some candlesticks or something like that, something or other, just as a joke for me. "Happy Birthday to the Californian," or something like that. They very much made me aware I was a Westerner.

Miss Green one morning--she was very fond of me and I of her--said, "Katherine, I realize that people speak in a different way in the West, but there is one word that you say that I find the pronunciation very hard to hear. It's a-range. You say o-range." [laughter] So from then on--I was so fond of her--we had a-range juice. I pronounced it her way.

But as far as the girls were concerned, I felt they were very conservative in their attitude toward their professors. They criticized me for asking questions in class. I asked them why. I said, "Haven't we come here to learn?" "Oh, yes, but you shouldn't ask a question unless you know a great deal."

"But," I said, "I can't know anything comparable to what the professor knows. I want to find out what he knows." But the professors didn't treat me that way at all. They were very responsive.

It was while I was at Radcliffe that I read the entire Divine Comedy, with the great Professor [Charles Hall] Grandgent. He was very old-fashioned in his attitude toward women, so when we came to anything, even a borderline case of having to do with sex, he then, instead of having us translate it, read it, just the text, in Italian. We didn't translate it at all, in other words, out loud.

Art History. Langdon Warner

Riess: When did you meet Langdon Warner?

Caldwell: I met him as soon as I came to Radcliffe, because he was a friend of Colonel Wood's. I had a personal letter to him and I was entertained in his home. So then I took his course, because I liked him.

Riess: His course was what?

Caldwell: Chinese and Japanese art. His specialty was Japanese art, but he gave the survey course, you see. So we started out with China.

Riess: Was that the first art history you had had?

Caldwell: Yes, that was the first art history course I ever had.

In Warner's class we went to the museums--the Boston Museum. Of course the Fogg Museum at Harvard is a fine place but the Boston Museum had these great, great collections of Chinese and Japanese art. That was a revelation to me. I realized I had never seen anything that you could call great Asian art on the West Coast. It was just a complete eye-opener.

Riess: Did you have an instant liking for the Chinese and Japanese art?

Caldwell: No--. Well, we always had the Chinese furniture you're sitting on right now, but I hadn't thought--. I've often wondered how influential the furnishings in my home were, but I can't really be sure there was any connection. I loved going to Chinatown with Colonel Wood, and I loved the Chinese that I saw with him,

and got an interest because he would go there to buy a bowl or a pewter dish or something, a container or something.

It must have been unconsciously influential. But I didn't go there saying, "Because I've come from San Francisco that has Chinatown, I am therefore going to become involved in Asian art." There was no positive connection is what I'm trying to say. It was just influential without being a positive decision.

Riess: Did taking that first class focus you on what you really liked?

Caldwell: I think it probably did, although I took other classes, you know, in art history there, too. I took one on the Renaissance with Chandler Post, who had been a school friend of my mother's in Detroit, Michigan.

Another thing that impressed me very much was the fact that our professors took us to private collections, and somehow it seemed such a marvelous opportunity to be able to see original works of art. But you know, art history wasn't my major. It was when I came back and got my master's degree at Harvard that I specialized in art history. And that was after I was married, when Jim was teaching at Harvard in a most lowly capacity, a teaching assistant.

I would like to talk more about Langdon Warner. He was a man who never had a Ph.D., who learned his craft and his skills by exploration. The focus of his life, the most important event professionally, was his visit to a place in western China called Tun Huang. There were some wonderful cave paintings there which had been preserved because of the weather--it's very dry--and also because the trade routes had changed and they had been isolated.

He made a very spectacular find there in--I've forgotten the year--and he had the permission of the Chinese government to take back some specimens. He presented his credentials to an uneducated priest who was presumably "in charge" of these caves. And he [the priest] said, "Well, take anything you want, except the new ones." Langdon Warner realized the ignorance of the priest, that he didn't recognize that these Eighth Century and earlier works were of course the greatest treasure.

With the permission of the Chinese government he took a sculpture, a kneeling bodhisattva--a bodhisattva is a Buddhist figure who is compassionate and delays going into nirvana in order to save other people--he took this almost lifesize figure made of unbaked clay, meaning it was so fragile that you almost were afraid that if you looked at it it would develop cracks,

wrapped it in his underwear, because he felt it didn't have enough packing, and took it by bullock-cart across these rough areas to where he could transport it to the United States.

As a student at Harvard, taking his class, my attention was focused on these works of art he had found in central Asia. This beautiful statue, and a piece of the wall. The Chinese, by the way, had neglected these beautiful works of art. It wasn't, curiously enough, until the Communist era when I suppose they were aware that these were tourist attractions, that they began to preserve them and were very severe about their being visited. But in those days nobody went there.

Langdon Warner's description, in a book called The Long Old Road in China, of his amazement at the beauty of these works of art, the preservation, is really something to read. I felt I had to go there, and so in the course of time I made a trip there. And this, of course, was the fulfillment of a wish, the hommage à mon cher professeur.

Riess: The pieces he brought back, the sculpture, and the piece of the cave wall, did he put them into a collection?

Caldwell: Oh, they were bought for Harvard. They are in the Fogg Museum. They were works of art that I looked at all the time I was a student there.

Riess: How extensive was the Asian art collection at the Fogg?

Caldwell: They had had some very fine bequests in the Asian field. Langdon Warner was a sort of adjunct curator. He was a lecturer in art history, but naturally anything Asian that was bought by the museum would be subject to his scrutiny, or his choice.

Riess: Did the Fogg compete with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts?

Caldwell: No. They were trying to acquire fine examples of Asian art in private holdings which they would like to have left to the museum. I don't think it was a competitive matter--maybe so, but I had never thought of it that way. They accepted, or probably sought out, but anyway, accepted gladly any distinguished collection that might be left to them. Some people prefer to leave their works of art to a university rather than to a city museum. But I didn't think it was ever very competitive.

Riess: You went often to the Museum of Fine Arts?

Caldwell: Oh yes, and at least twice a month our art history classes in Asian art would meet at the Boston Museum. This, of course, was a very impressive event for me because out in California we had nothing of high quality in Asian art. It opened my eyes to the fact that whereas San Franciscans had always talked about being "the gateway to the Orient," they had no examples at all of great works of art. And I think even back as a student I had the wish that sometime San Francisco could acquire a great collection. Never dreaming--nobody had even heard of Mr. [Avery] Brundage, or the Brundage collection at that time.

Riess: Did you meet other collectors when you were at Harvard?

Caldwell: We were taken to private collections. But mostly the Boston Museum. You see, there are more examples of the works of Asian art from every country in the Boston Museum than any other place in the world. As far as Asian art was concerned, we didn't necessarily need to go to other private collections. In Western art, yes, a great many, and in Philadelphia and New York.

Riess: You said you met [Ananda Kent] Coomaraswamy [collector of Indian painting and sculpture]?

Caldwell: I met him at dinner at Langdon Warner's house. He was a formidable man. You were afraid to ask him a question because you probably wouldn't understand the answer. [laughs]

I would like to mention the name of a scholar of Japanese art that I met who was a teacher [at Harvard]. His name was Soetsu Yanagi. Warner invited him from Japan, and he was in charge of folk art. I became very much interested in folk art.

[looking at pictures and article about the history of the Museum of Fine Arts] These people, I knew who they were, but I didn't know them. Remember I was an undergraduate. Although I did have one graduate year under Paul Sachs, of course, who I knew very well.

Riess: You made a check mark in this article next to the statement, "The late 12th Century hand scroll, 'Kibi's Adventures in China,' had been on the Japanese art market for some years..." What about that?

Caldwell: Yes, that made such an impression on me, that scroll. It's a wonderful scroll. The Japanese were distracted by the Industrial Revolution and didn't hang onto their works of art at that time, and Boston was able to get these extraordinary works, marvelous things.

Marriage, and Travel Time

Riess: You were married in September of 1929.

Caldwell: That's right.

Riess: Jim continued at Wisconsin?

Caldwell: No, he moved on to Harvard to get his Ph.D. So he was there [Cambridge] my senior year [KC received B.A. from Radcliffe in 1928.] It might have been--it had to be my senior year, because he was not there my junior year. We were married after that, after I got my bachelor's degree. Then we came back. He had a job as a teaching assistant, and we were there for two years.

Riess: You had a period of travel in there, didn't you?

Caldwell: Yes, that's right, after I graduated. I got my degree in the middle of the year, and I went over to Europe by myself for a short time.

Riess: You went to Greece with the American Academy in Rome?

Caldwell: That's true, yes, I did. I had taken a course in Greek archaeology at Harvard, and the professor said, "Well, if you're going abroad, be sure to get in touch with the American Academy in Rome. I'll give you an introduction." They go to Greece every April. Mostly they take students who are enrolled in the academy, but if they have any vacant places and you have a recommendation, academic one, they'll take you. He said, "The minute you get to Naples, telephone--" which I did. I then went to Rome and joined the group going to Greece.

It cost two hundred dollars for the entire month. I went for something like three weeks in Greece. From Italy, traveling all over Greece and back again, all for \$200 a month, including transportation to and from Italy to Greece. [laughs] On a cattle ship, to be sure. Or no, it was another kind of animal--goats I guess they were.

Master's Degree: Paul Sachs, and Consequences for San Francisco

Riess: In your undergraduate work at Radcliffe had you become acquainted with the museum program at the Fogg?

Caldwell: Oh, that was not until I came back for my master's degree that I took the first course in the United States on museums and history of museums, the conditions under which objects should be kept in museums. It was kind of an overall survey of museum management.

Riess: Paul Sachs taught that course?

Caldwell: Yes. I didn't care for him at all as a person, although he was very, very able in what he did. He had been connected with Goldman Sachs, a big investment firm in New York City. I guess maybe he was attached to it by family rather than having actually worked there, because he kept telling us, "Make a decision. Either you go in for teaching or you go in for business. You cannot mix the two."

All of that changed later. R.E. Lewis in San Francisco, who is in Marin County now, who deals in prints, probably knows more about prints than anybody else, or as much as anybody else, and he's considered just as reputable as a university professor. But in that day, the idea was you never can go into teaching if you've ever been in trade. And he made this great point.

Riess: Museum science, what is that considered to be? Which end of the spectrum is it?

Caldwell: Oh, if you're a professional it's like being a college professor, to go into museum work.

Riess: But in fact, you often end up being an administrator.

Caldwell: But you're not buying and selling objects. That's the important thing, you see. The idea is, if you're in trade you might be tempted to sell something to a museum that wasn't as valuable as purported to be, something like that.

Sachs was very wealthy, and he had a beautiful house on Shady Hill in Cambridge, and that's where he had his graduate students meet. I was very glad to have taken the course, but I had a very unfortunate experience, very unfortunate for San Francisco.

At the time, the Legion of Honor in San Francisco had a succession of unsuccessful museum directors. Two of them, a husband and wife, had been dope fiends, as well as people that just were incompetent. I, all full of excitement and crusading zeal, wrote my stepfather, "You know, they train people here to be museum directors."

So when they wanted to get rid of somebody in the Legion of Honor, Pops, who knew everybody, said to Mortimer Fleishhacker or whoever it was, Herbert Fleishhacker, president of the Arts Commission in San Francisco, "My daughter's right at Harvard where they can find somebody to replace him." Well, that man, I regret to say, was gay, though we didn't have that term for them then.

Anyhow, he had come from Oakland, and he was at Harvard, and he was head of the tutors there, and they wanted to get rid of him, not because he was homosexual, but because he was making problems. I didn't know any of that. So when the delegation came from San Francisco, and I introduced them to Mr. Sachs, and they made a deal, Mr. Sachs unloaded this man on San Francisco, and he was an absolute disaster. [See more on this story, p. 165]

It was one of the most disillusioning experiences in my life. I was so full of zeal and happiness about being a liaison between Harvard and San Francisco, and it was an absolute, absolute fiasco. And so that was a bad result of having taken the museum course.

Riess: Was Grace Morley at the Fogg when you were there?

Caldwell: Oh, no, I never knew her until years and years later. I never knew her, until she came to Berkeley. She came much later.

Riess: I was wondering if you had met her at the Fogg.

Caldwell: Oh, no. I didn't meet her until much later, in San Francisco. She was married to a professor here.

Asian Art Studies

Caldwell: I was definitely drawn to Asian art in a way I wasn't to any other civilization.

Riess: Did you learn a language?

Caldwell: Oh, that's an interesting thing. Of course, I thought I should. You can't imagine how astonished and almost incredulous young people are today when I tell them this, but do you know, at Harvard at that time you were not allowed to study Chinese or Japanese as a language unless you were specializing in the language itself.

They said "Chinese and Japanese, unlike any other languages, are so difficult that you can't possibly have two disciplines--history and Japanese, history and Chinese." In other words, their idea was if you were in art history, and you wanted to know what somebody in China or Japan had written, you got someone to translate it for you, rather than learning the language and then translating it yourself. And indeed Japanese is more difficult than any language in the world; that's a fact. Much harder than Chinese in terms of structure.

Then when the Second World War came and they started having these saturation courses for military purposes the whole attitude changed, and the need for having specialists in the language was so great that that's the reason almost all the scholars that we have now in universities teaching in Asian fields are veterans of the Second World War. They were sent to these specialized schools, and then they were so equipped with the language, they wanted to use it. Or else they were so enamored of it.

James Cahill is an example, one of the great specialists in Chinese art in the world. To be sure, he was learning Japanese, and then later learned Chinese, but he's an outstanding example of this phenomenon.

Riess: In any event, you didn't get an opportunity.

Caldwell: No, I didn't. And of course, this was a great handicap later on, because a few years later everybody assumed that if you were in the Asian field you knew either Chinese or Japanese or preferably both. I tried to learn Japanese at one time. But it really takes such dedication; you just have to saturate yourself in it for years in order to do it.

I have a friend who's in art history. She got her doctorate at New York University, which is one of the best places for Asian art. I met her in Kyoto. She had been there for two years studying the language. We went to the theater. She couldn't understand what the man said who announced the change in the personnel, and she couldn't read the program.

Riess: She must have been fit to be tied.

Caldwell: No, she accepted that in her own little narrow field of Japanese she knew she could do something, and otherwise not. It's highly specialized.



Charles Erskine Scott Wood, Sara Bard Field, Katherine Field Caldwell, and James R. Caldwell on the Caldwell's wedding day at The Cats, 1929.

Photograph by Ansel Adams



Kay, Sara, Jim, "Pops", and Robinson Jeffers at Tor House, Carmel, circa 1932.

V RETURN TO BERKELEY, THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

A Job, A First Home, and A Visitor, Ella Young

Riess: In 1929 you received your M.A. in fine arts at Radcliffe College [Harvard], and the two of you came out here in 1930. Was there a consideration on Jim's part of taking a job anywhere other than Berkeley?

Caldwell: No, I think not. Of course, Mother and Pops were very anxious we should be out here. I don't know what fine recommendations he had on the part of people in California, like Ben Lehman--of course he was interviewed by someone who had never heard of him or knew him, so that was objective. But the whole idea of his being interested in coming to Berkeley was because Mother and Pops really wanted us out here.

Certainly he couldn't just be taken in by influence. It was not a situation like Dominican College had been; this is a big university with very high standards, and he had to be chosen very objectively. But the fact that he wanted to come to Berkeley was really because Mother and Pops wanted us so badly.

Riess: Did they find a place for you to live? How did you start out?

Caldwell: When we came out here, the man that built the house for them in Los Gatos, Walter Steilberg, he had a house overlooking the stadium, in that area just slightly south of the campus. He was building some little experimental houses, experimental from the point of view of the materials he was using, cement blocks. He built one right behind his house, off of Panoramic Way--also off of a lane, we always seem to live in inaccessible places--that's where we lived. We were the first occupants of this new house.

Riess: What address was that?

Caldwell: Number One, Orchard Lane. [By September 1931 that house was renumbered and addressed: Number 4, Mosswood Lane. JRKK]

It was a very, very beautiful little house, very small. Ella Young visited us there, the Irish folklorist. Do you know about Ella Young? She was a very famous person in her time. A woman named Padrian McGillicuddy down in southern California is doing a book on her right now. She comes to see me every now and then.

Riess: Ella Young visited because she was a friend of Jim's?

Caldwell: Oh, no. Ella Young was a friend of Noel Sullivan, and whether it was through Ben Lehman that Noel knew her, I don't know. Noel, always a willing person to cooperate in cultural affairs, paid for her to be what we now call a Regent's professor, but it wasn't that concept then. An adjunct professor maybe. I don't know how long that expression's been used either. Anyway, she wasn't a tenured, regular, ongoing faculty member, but she had courses, and Noel Sullivan funded this, although of course again it had to go through proper academic critical consideration, evaluation.

She was here for quite a while, and she was the most spellbinding person. She had the most [imitating] "loovely" voice you can imagine, just lilting. And she had a magic effect on groups. She never raised her voice, she had a very low voice. But there might be a party with thirty-five or forty people, and little by little, they all clustered at her feet to hear these marvelous Irish folktales that she'd tell.

She actually believed in magic, and she believed that a creature named Gilpin was her tease. She really believed if she couldn't find her glasses, that Gilpin had moved them from one place to another and hidden them from her. I remember once she was our houseguest in this little house of Steilberg. A door creaked downstairs. "Oh," she said, "Gilpin's there." And she believed it!

And once at one of these huge gatherings at some large house in Berkeley, everybody was clustered around--young people would sit at her feet--and there was an enormous grand piano across the room, and all of a sudden, nobody being near it, one of the notes sounded. We had been listening to her tales, you know, of magic, and we were all--. What had happened was that there was a candle, and wax had fallen on the key. Of course, not from her point of view. That was one of her "little people." [laughs]

Riess: She stayed with you?

Caldwell: She just stayed with us a short time. We were very fond of her.

Riess: That was an interesting part of town, where you were living.

Caldwell: Yes, it was, but the stadium had been built long before then, and on football game days you had to have a permit to get through the police that would not allow cars up the hill, to prove that you lived there. An awfully nice house just above that one came on the market, and we thought of renting it, but we couldn't bear to live in that area because of the football confusion.

Riess: How long did you stay there?

Caldwell: I don't remember how long we were there, though of course I could figure it out [1930-1932]. Actually we were forced to move when I was pregnant with Sara, and we needed a bigger house. And then we did something--. I don't know what other young people who lived on such a small income did, but we liked room, and of course we couldn't afford to buy a house, and we couldn't afford to rent a house with a lot of room, so we would rent a house that was for sale, and we'd get one with four bedrooms in a nice area. But of course we had to move when it was sold. And we did that several times.

Riess: And you could afford that.

Caldwell: Yes. Fifty dollars a month for a four-bedroom house in a nice area.

Benjamin Lehman, "Bull" Durham, the Bronsons and the Clines

Riess: Who were your first really good Berkeley friends?

Caldwell: Oh, Ben Lehman, and I'll tell you, Willard Durham, whom we called "Bull." He was wonderful to us. Bull Durham on the faculty was nicer to us than anybody else, and he told us where to buy good cheeses and wines cheaply, and so on. And he loved young people. Do you have an oral history on him?

Riess: No.

Caldwell: Oh, no, you couldn't. I don't think the concept of the oral history had come into being before he died.

Riess: How much older were they than you, Lehman and Durham?

Caldwell: Oh, a lot. Bull particularly was much older. He was old enough to be our father, or more. But we adored him, and he just loved all young people. He took them under his wing when they came here.

Riess: And friends on Panoramic Way?

Caldwell: No, we didn't--I don't think that's ever been true. People--you know your immediate neighbors maybe, but we didn't stay there all that long. Of course, we knew the Steilbergs very well. We were just right in their back yard.

Riess: And Helena Steilberg, was she there?

Caldwell: Oh, she was so much younger then. Just a very little girl. Helena's quite a character. I'm very fond of her. But I didn't know her then except as a little girl.

Riess: When you became part of the English department the people who really reached out to you were Ben Lehman and Durham?

Caldwell: Well, I would say Bull Durham more, and a little later on Ben Lehman.

I must say that at that time, even though relative to other departments the English department was enormous, nevertheless the attitude then was, everyone tried to entertain newcomers, so we met a great many of the established professors in their private homes. That doesn't happen any more. Josephine Miles was very bitter about that later on, because she used to entertain so much, and she would say, "You know, someone who's been at my house for dinner, some young professor, doesn't even say hello on campus."

But in those days you were welcomed at small dinners. Of course, people had cocktail parties, but the small dinner party was really the way you became acquainted and entertained your friends. You didn't try for anything fancy. You had no--at least we didn't--sense of having to keep up with a higher standard of living than we could afford. And people helped on the dishes, and that kind of thing.

Riess: In Ben Lehman's oral history he talks of sitting at the dinner tables of people of great social prominence, and he talks very interestingly about the art of the dinner party.

Caldwell: Well, he lived in San Francisco as much as he lived here, his social life, you know.

At first I was very melancholy when I would go around, without being immediately conscious of why I felt so depressed. I started to try to analyze it, and I'd realize it would be passing houses or places that I had unpleasant memories of, or something. And the Baptist church at Dana and Haste, always to this day I feel very, very depressed when I pass the Baptist church where I was obliged to go to prayer meetings and Sunday services and so on.

But on the other hand, you see, the English department then, there was a certain little group within the department--this probably happens in all universities--that was especially bound together, and we were taken in to this group right away. Did you ever do an oral history on Professor Bronson?

Riess: No.

Caldwell: Oh, such a wonderful man. And Jim Cline, and a certain little coterie, you might say. And because of Jim, of course, they--when I say "we" were taken in, it was of course men that were attracted to one another, and the wives happened to like each other, too. So we had made friends very quickly within the department, and they were our closest friends. Many of them were our own age.

See, Ben and Bull Durham were the only ones of the older generation that we were very close to. I remember now that Walter Morris Hart was the one who interviewed Jim for his job here. I think he came to Harvard and interviewed him there, if I'm not mistaken. And of course, he and his wife were very much older, and very, very conventional.

The Walter Morris Harts, T.S. Eliot, and Social Mores

Caldwell: The reason I'm smiling is, it was a long time before I met Mrs. Hart. Somehow or other I met him. Whether she was away or ill I don't know. One of our colleagues gave a costume party, and Jim and I went, he as a nursemaid and I as a baby in a baby carriage. And I had a bottle, but of course it had wine in it instead of milk. And under those circumstances, I met Mrs. Walter Morris Hart, sitting in this silly baby carriage [laughing], holding a bottle. I was so embarrassed.

Later on we were entertained there, and one of my most painful memories was a dinner there for T.S. Eliot, only a tiny party. And oh! this is when I wondered why we ever came back to Berkeley. First of all, they did not refill the women's wine glasses, only the men's. But that was not all. After dinner, the men went to Professor Hart's study and did not return until we went home.

I was in tears when I came home. I had grown up in a family where there was no separation of the sexes after dinner, and where women were considered the intellectual equals of men, and here we were--I felt utterly downgraded. I remember just crying and crying and crying, I was so disappointed. I had wanted to see more of T.S. Eliot too, you know. I thought, what kind of a world is this that we've come into?

Later on, of course, many, many, many years later, my mother and Walter Morris Hart formed a very cordial, warm relationship. He proposed to her, actually, when she was in her eighties. Of course, she did not accept this. But they used to have literary lunches, and they had a long correspondence. I have quantities of letters in the other room, it's incredible.

Riess: Did Jim understand your feelings?

Caldwell: I think he understood, but he had lots of adjusting himself to do here, you know, courses to prepare and so on.

Jim I think was more cooperative about my working than any husband I can imagine of his day. But I don't think he could imagine the isolation that a woman who had been brought up in an intellectual environment felt when she was suddenly a housewife. This was before I actually had established myself over at the museum in San Francisco.

When I got a job he couldn't have been more understanding and more helpful. And also raising the children. Then again, there was a period of course when I wanted to stay home for a certain number of months after each child was born, but again, I felt that intellectual distance from stimulating groups. He'd tell me about all these wonderful lunches on campus with his colleagues. The professors meet around a table, you know, at lunch all the time, in every department.

I felt very cut off from what was going on in the world, and I would be pretty envious of that stimulation, until I went back to work.

Riess: Was Section Club stimulating?

Caldwell: I don't know if stimulating is the word. We joined the drama group from the beginning. At that time, I never acted in them, but Jim just loved them, and he was awfully good at any kind of part, whether it was a butler or a king, it didn't matter. I think anybody that likes acting feels that way; they don't really necessarily want a big part.

Riess: The Bronson-Cline wives, did they feel the way you did?

Caldwell: No. I don't think so. But then, they weren't brought up the way I was. They're wonderful people, you understand. Mildred Bronson is still living. She was ninety last year, and her birthday's coming up very soon. I must remember it, in September.

Riess: You weren't at the point in your own development of walking across the floor and flinging open the door and saying, "I'm going to spend this evening with Mr. Eliot too!"

Caldwell: Oh, no--oh, heavens, no! Oh, heavens, you couldn't imagine! I wouldn't have dreamed--it would never have entered my head to make any protest at the time. Only when I got home and wept.

I just loved the wives of the English department people, but they had entirely--they didn't mind being just wives. I was not used to the separation of the sexes, socially. I was criticized for sort of joining in men's conversations. But really it was only at the Harts' that the men did that. I don't think that ever happened again. They [the Walter Morris Harts] belonged to an entirely different social--I hate to say, not quite class, but followed very conventional social mores, whereas most of the University people didn't do that.

Riess: What about Benjamin Lehman, if he gave a dinner party?

Caldwell: Oh, no, he didn't do that. After all, he did marry Judith Anderson. But most women preferred to talk about domestic affairs, so that though they weren't separated after dinner physically in a different room, they more or less clustered together, and talked about the best bargains here and so on there. I was not as interested in those topics. [laughs]

The Denneses and the Rosses

Riess: According to your resumé, in 1930 you were a lecturer at the Legion of Honor. Would faculty wives, like Mrs. Walter Morris Hart, have seen you as a career woman?

Caldwell: Oh, no. I was in the category of faculty wife, so far as the women at the University were concerned. That's the role I was expected to play. But I was very young and had no idea of that. I grew up in quite a different atmosphere, where faculty people and people of any kind of intellectual background were all mixed together.

Riess: Were there faculty wives who right away you found a kind of rapport with?

Caldwell: Oh, yes. I did indeed. The Denneses. Will Dennes was in the philosophy department, and his wife, Margaret Dennes, was an extremely intellectual woman. And of course there were women in the faculty wives group who shared intellectual interests, and artistic ones. But Margaret Dennes and Will Dennes were just remarkable.

And then we were very fond of the Edward Tolmans, very fond. Mrs. Tolman, who had graduated from Radcliffe, and was part of the local chapter of the Radcliffe Club, became a very, very close friend. She was a person I greatly admired. Oh, there were a number of women. The Whipples, I was crazy about the Whipples, T.K. Whipple and his wife, Mary Ann. These were all people that we just loved.

Then when it came to--. I suppose we could call it a clique, although we never thought of it that way, never thought of ourselves as exclusive. But we were taken right into a small group of people that originally, before our arrival from Cambridge, had met together socially and more or less informally. That was Professor and Mrs. Bronson, and Jim Cline, and John and Nancy Ross.

Riess: That's a name I don't know, Ross.

Caldwell: Really? Well, it was a tragic thing, what happened about him. John and his wife were delightful people, had a lovely little house up on Woodmont Avenue. John was a very peculiar personality, and he could become, let's say, offbeat in what he had to say on one glass of sherry. He didn't get along with the chairman of the English department, and they had another, what they considered "problem" man down at UCLA, and they exchanged

them. These charming people that we just loved were forced to leave Berkeley. But he was a rather eccentric and delightful man.

Riess: These were people from Harvard?

Caldwell: Bud Bronson I think was Yale, but I'm not sure. Nancy Ross I think had gone to another women's college, maybe Vassar or something like that. Anyway, they were from the East Coast, Nancy and John Ross were. I don't know where the Clines came from. Actually, Jim had married someone who was a nurse, and was a charming, nice woman, but not part of that intellectual world.

But this was a very, very special group, and they had a wonderful sense of humor. We would go on trips together in the summer in the Sierra, also, camping. There was lots of conversation, and lots of merriment. Wonderful sense of humor everybody had. Very bright.

Riess: The English department then seems like a pretty intense group of people, a lot of rivalries and factions.

Caldwell: I suppose there were a lot of rivalries and factions. I was just more aware of the small, congenial group. Though I met other people in the department, and there was one faculty wife, an older one--quite older, Morris Hart's generation--I'm ashamed I can't think of her name, I'll dig it out of my memory at some point. They were very much concerned about us.

We thought we couldn't afford to live in a "nice" house--nice in the sense of East Bay hills--and we were thinking of renting a house down in West Berkeley. This faculty wife took me aside very carefully, gave me quite a talk about how it would not be an area to raise children in. We didn't have any children, of course, yet. But anyway, it would not be a proper area to raise children in, and we must surely find a place to live in the East Bay hills.

Riess: The question of where you send your children to school, and whether to live in West Berkeley or not, was that a racial issue?

Caldwell: It was more economic. It was a very poor area, and therefore not--people hadn't the advantage of education, not an educated area. The blacks came in after the Second World War.

Riess: Faculty sent their children to the Berkeley schools?

Caldwell: Oh, yes. Up there on Le Roy Avenue, when I was a girl, some neighbors of mine went to a private school, but not very many. Almost everyone sent their children to the Berkeley public schools, because they were very good at that time, very good. And my children, too, went to the Berkeley public schools, with the exception that briefly my daughter went to the Anna Head School, but not very long.

Jim Caldwell's Academic and ACLU Interests

Riess: In the In Memoriam biography of Jim Caldwell [published in 1966], I read that he was full professor in 1946, "a student of Medieval Latin, of Gothic, and Old Norse."

Caldwell: He wrote a book on John Keats, however. Nineteenth-century Romantic poetry was an attraction for him. But he had gotten into Medieval studies at Harvard, and picked it up again later.

Riess: And his "effort to make of the Extension Division a more effective and far-reaching instrument for the realization of his ideal," what was that about?

Caldwell: That was much, much later, towards the end of his life. He didn't approve of some of the principles by which the Extension Division was run, and he wanted to have it--he felt that too much money was being spent on it. I'm not altogether clear, to tell you the truth, on his attitude toward the Extension Division, and I was not very much interested in the Extension Division myself.

I think academically, he felt it watered down the standards, and that too much money was being diverted to it--I think. Now, I may be wrong about that. This was so much later in his life, really very, very late in his life, a short few years before he died, that he got interested in that problem. The Extension Division, I never could quite understand why he was quite so involved in it, so I'm not a very good source of information about that.

Riess: The In Memoriam statement was written by Charles Muscatine, and Professors Bronson and Cline, and it picks up on these various themes.

Caldwell: Yes, yes. Well, of course, he was devoted--I can't remember how early he became associated with the ACLU, but that was a long association, and he was on the local board for a long time, and

eventually on the national board, too. He was absolutely faithful to the meetings, and he felt very strongly. So that was one of the reasons why the loyalty oath situation was particularly crucial in his life.

Riess: Did he get started with the ACLU through the relationship with Meiklejohn?

Caldwell: Well, also, my mother and stepfather had been on it from almost the beginning. I can't remember, though, exactly how he happened to be asked to be on the board. It could have been through Helen Salz, a wonderful woman. I'm not exactly sure at what point, and through what particular individual, he became attached to the civil liberties, but it was quite early on and ongoing.

Riess: And what did he bring to the Civil Liberties Union?

Caldwell: Well, he was interested, like Meiklejohn, in the First Amendment, in the speech situation. I think that was the chief focus.

Riess: And conscientious objector status?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, conscientious objector, that's right, that is true. And then later on, of course, the loyalty oath.

Friendship with Mr. Shiota

Riess: Were these issues that troubled him a lot, or could he compartmentalize and go on with his academic work?

Caldwell: I don't know what to say. Yes, he was very serious about these things. Trouble? It didn't keep him awake at night, no. But the loyalty oath later on did. That was a frightful thing.

But the question of conscientious objection, it might interest you to know that he was also on the Draft Board. Maybe his colleagues didn't realize that. He was on the Draft Board during the Second World War. And he was interested in the conscientious objectors at that time, too. He had a dual approach.

Riess: Jim volunteered to be on the Draft Board?

Caldwell: Yes, I think that was a volunteer thing, I'm sure it was. He greatly believed in that war. I guess that's the only one that people of ordinary pacifistic temperaments could accept. I mean, after all, Hitler and the Jewish situation was so appalling. He really believed in that war. So did my mother and stepfather.

I was just astonished, because I held out for my pacifism for a long, long time. [laughs] There was always a pacifist group at the University, too. I think Kathleen Tolman was interested in that--wonderful woman. You know, she was the wife of the man who took the lead in fighting the loyalty oath, Edward Tolman.

Actually, at the time he was on the Draft Board I had a very dear, elderly Japanese friend who was in the art trade, Mr. Shiota. He had the finest shop on Grant Avenue. He dealt in Chinese works of art, particularly Chinese bronzes. Because he was born in Japan, was not a citizen, he was put in a prison camp rather than in a so-called relocation center. I sent him some fruit, and the other members of the Draft Board accused Jim of not being a loyal citizen, or his wife's not being a loyal citizen, sending a present to the enemy.

Jim was very angry about that, and he insisted that an investigation be made in print of this Japanese friend, Mr. Shiota, and he was utterly cleared. And Jim wanted me to be cleared, and he also wanted his own reputation as my spouse to be cleared.

The rest of that story is that the great Chinese bronzes were impounded by the government, and I went over to the bank to see what was happening to those bronzes that were impounded, in the very beginning of this terrible fury against the Japanese, and the man at the bank said, "You're the first person who has had anything good to say about any Japanese." He wasn't hostile toward me, but just, "How can you do this?" This made a great impression on them.

Riess: Going back, had your mother and Colonel Wood friends in the Asian community?

Caldwell: Just mostly Chinese, except for Mr. Shiota. My stepfather used to spend a lot of time wandering around Chinatown, and feeling sorry for the poor business conditions, and therefore buying things that we didn't need. Much to my mother's distress, he was always buying something. After he died there were probably lots of things he paid for and never picked up. But yes, we had quite a number of connections. All through these art stores,

rather than through intellectual sources. Nothing to do with academia, or literature.

I was impressed at Berkeley High with the fact that we had Oriental companions, although there were very few blacks, and that was not until World War II when the government brought in hundreds of blacks for Richmond, into the industrial plants. I was very apprehensive about the Japanese children--Hearst had these terrible blasts against them. I was ill at ease with them, I didn't know what to say. When I think of the Japanese friends I have now, and my many trips to Japan!

And then after the Second World War was over Jim and I would never take a student helper into the house except a Japanese-American. One of the most remarkable students I ever had living here was a Japanese-American. He was here for three years, and almost like our son. Marvelous person.

Riess: Odd that you would have been uncomfortable with them. They were such a minority, and white Americans are such a majority.

Caldwell: I know. I didn't feel an aversion to them at all, just not knowing how to communicate. Even though they spoke English, of course, because they were born here.

At the time of the evacuation, a terrible thing happened in my daughter's class at school. My daughter was in elementary school, something like eight or nine years old. Their favorite student in the class was a Japanese-American. They got a cake and ice cream for the farewell party for her, and in the midst of the party the principal came in and said it had come down from the superintendent of schools that no aliens--no Japanese were to be honored. These eight and nine-year olds, they were angry and they were all in tears. Isn't that terrible, to take that out on a child!

On the other hand, I have to speak with great, great admiration for some of the Christian churches here. The Congregational Church, I remember, just turned over the church to counsel in helping these people. And people were taking in treasures that belonged to the Japanese to house them for the duration. [pauses] I feel very emotional about this. By this time--this was much later than my high school experience--I had made friends with Japanese people that were dear, dear friends.

Ben Lehman's Circle, and Wives Judith Anderson and Henriette Durham

Riess: Benjamin Lehman was a decade older than Jim?

Caldwell: Oh, even more, I think. He seemed to us very much a senior--not a senior citizen, but established. After all, he was a full professor, you know. Those distinctions were very crucial to young people at that time.

Riess: Was he imposing and self-important?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, he always was very self-important.

I don't think I'm a very good person to evaluate Ben, because I was one of the few people that was critical of him, and everybody else thought he was wonderful.

Riess: Why were you critical of him?

Caldwell: Because of his attitude toward women in the University. He didn't think there should be any women in the English department. I got off on the wrong foot with him at lunch the first time I met him by saying, "It's too bad there aren't more women." He said, "Oh, no. Men would never enroll in classes run by women." And I thought that was terrible.

My mother, of course, he admired, and she, heaven knows, has had a career, and would certainly have--I wasn't as gracious as my mother in handling these controversial topics. I'm afraid I met him head-on.

Riess: Did Benjamin Lehman set a social tone? What was that lunch?

Caldwell: That was when he had the house up on Mosswood Road. It was a house with Marion Parsons that he was so fond of, such a lovely woman, oh, she was a wonderful person. And it was there, as I remember, that I first saw him, and I think it was at that luncheon that I expressed my dismay that there were no women in the English department. But somehow or other, our chemistry just didn't mix.

Riess: When he married Judith Anderson, how was she as a faculty wife?

Caldwell: Oh, she was marvelous.

Riess: Where was she in her career at the time when she married?

Caldwell: I have no idea. I feel so embarrassed not to be able to tell you more, but I was really pretty absorbed in my own world, you know, of art, and I also had to prepare talks and do a lot of background work for this, and run my house. Because I was very good at being a good housewife, in the sense of good meals and organization. And I delegated the cleaning, as I've said earlier, to somebody else.

But anyway, because we all entertained one another at that time, and welcomed people, we welcomed Ben's new wife. So we had a little dinner party. I was always the cook, of course; when I say have a dinner party, I don't mean it was catered or anything. We all did it; we lived on a shoestring, and we did our own work.

I kind of dreaded entertaining them, because I thought she was going to be this grande dame, but she couldn't have been nicer. She was just folksy and human--dear. I just was pleasantly surprised at how nice she was, and that was that.

Did I tell you the episode about wanting to buy Ben's house? Jim and I were very fond of the Tamalpais Road area, and the house we'd rented there for some time--which the [Robert Gordon] Sprouls eventually bought, by the way. We didn't buy it because it didn't get any winter sun. But Ben's house we thought was just perfect, and when he said he wanted to sell it, we approached him about it, and he agreed.

We had gotten to the point where we even measured the rooms and rugs and furniture, and one morning we came down to pick up the paper, and underneath the paper was a little note from Ben saying, "I cannot part with the house in which I have lived with Judith Anderson." And we were absolutely stunned! We were just heartbroken about not getting that house. That was it!

I know that that one time when he had that house--and he was a very fine gardener--some neighbor saw him walking around in the garden and said, "I don't think there's anybody in Berkeley that's more lonely than Ben Lehman." So that must have been a time when he had no wife.

Riess: When he married Henriette Durham, did they live in Berkeley at all?

Caldwell: No, they didn't. When she was married to Bull Durham, they did. And that was very amusing, because Bull had a small house up near Grizzly Peak, in that area. It was a small house, and then he married Henriette and they had to have a bigger house. He always said that his was just the tail, then, on this main house

[laughs]. They lived there quite a little while. We used to be entertained there.

But no, Ben went down to Saratoga when he married Henriette. Someone said the other day, someone that knew Henriette very well, said that she could never bear to be alone, just couldn't bear to be alone. That's interesting to me, because I am a great admirer of Henriette, I think she's one of the most remarkable women I ever knew.

Riess: Where did she come from?

Caldwell: I don't really know, except that we were told--you know, these things can be rumors--that she was one of the wealthiest women in the state of California. The reason--well, this may just be folklore--the reason she was so wealthy was because she had so many maiden aunts who had died and left their money to her. Now, whether that's true or not I have no idea.

A Story About Muriel Rukeyser

Caldwell: Henriette and my mother became very great friends. The thing about Henriette was she was enormously generous, but she was always anonymous. I'm told--again, this is probably an exaggeration--that if the symphony or the opera had a deficit they'd appeal to her and she'd pick up the tab. Now, to what extent--. Anyway, she never wanted to be given credit for her generosity.

She and my mother were allied in the support of--turn that off just a minute, I must think of her name. [pauses] Muriel Rukeyser. My mother and Henriette decided to finance this woman through her pregnancy. And you can imagine years ago this was something! They insisted that she must have a ring when she was in the hospital, or the nurses would not like it. So they financed this.

For years and years and years, Muriel would not say who was the father of this child. It was a boy, turned out to be very successful, I think in journalism [William L. Rukeyser]. Anyway, she decided to tell who the father was, and you'll just never believe it! It was one of Robinson Jeffers's sons. She said they had "a toss in the hay" after a cocktail party. That's what I heard.

Riess: [laughs] That's a great story!

You said Henriette and your mother were friends?

Caldwell: Yes, down at Los Gatos. Henriette lived nearby, in Saratoga. We used to see a lot of her. Jim and I used to go over and swim at the pool at Henriette's place, and we became very good friends. And later Jim, because of the friendship with Albert Elkus, was on the board of the Conservatory of Music in San Francisco, and he saw a lot of Henriette that way. And of course, when she was married to Bull here in Berkeley, we saw a lot of her.

Riess: So at first she was down there, and then married Durham here.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. She had her children by a man named Goodrich, and then subsequently married Bull, and then after that, married Ben. We were at the marriage of her daughter Carol, my husband and I, in the house down in Saratoga.

Riess: These people are almost larger than life, really.

Caldwell: [laughs] Yes. Muriel Rukeyser was a great friend of Marie Welch-West. She and my mother were very close friends.

Una and Robinson Jeffers, and a Letter, 1929

Riess: Please tell me about the poem that you found when you found the diary.

Caldwell: Oh, yes, I wrote it for my mother's birthday, September 1, 1925.

Riess: Would you read it?

Caldwell: You read it.

Riess: "Because you always tried to penetrate/ The intricacies of our little minds/ Inquisitively tense, insatiate;/ Destroyed the taunting terrors ignorance binds/ Us with; created fairy worlds never betrayed/ The whispered confidences shyly made./Loved our companionship nor sought to hide/ Earth's cycle birth and death, identified/ Yourself with each maturing mood,/ Yours no outgrown indifferent gratitude."

Caldwell: [laughs] Pretty bad.

Here, this is a lovely letter I got from Una Jeffers. It's about not coming to my wedding. It was written from

Cornwall--November 13, 1929. I was married on the first of September.

"Kay, my dear. Do accept our loving wishes for your happiness even if so belated in their expression. Our thoughts have turned to you often and often. Now I am hearing from many people of the exquisite beauty of your wedding and of your radiant self. Just yesterday a letter from Ben Lehman caught us at [Zennor?] and he was lyrical about it all. Sara and Erskine and their home and life have become to many of us a symbol of love and beauty and these gracious amenities which make one forget the bitter harsh thing life can be. One loves living thinking of them. I think you were lucky indeed to be married, from their house, surrounded by their love.

"I am enclosing a photograph of Caldwell Tower which may interest you if your Jim's family is Scotch. It has been until recently in the Caldwell family since it was built in the XV Century. There is an old book of annals of the family Muir (or Mure) of Caldwell telling most thrilling history of it. Our connection with it is this: A relative of mine, by marriage, owns a little house near there and we stayed with her (Renfrewshire, Scotland). A year ago she acquired this tower which stands alone on a high hill near her (and beneath it the road and the spot where Queen Mary halted after the battle of Langside). She is restoring it inside to its original shape, finding secret closets and niches and so on, getting the fireplaces cleaned out. Robin, the boys and I had a delightful time about it. The excrescence on the side is temporary, a storm porch to enable her to get to the upper parlor or bower during the winter when the wind and swirling hail and snow sweep one off his feet. A better thing is to be [designed?]. The other sides have more windows.

"We have had so happy and thrilling a time over here, questing after those beautiful ancient, inexplicable Round Towers in Ireland, then careening all over Scotland during the gorgeous September weather, gazing on these proud splendid Highlanders assembled in kilts and plaids for the Highland games at Oban and Inverness. Going up to John O'Groats, bare wild free country and the air like wine. Now we are in Cornwall, and this hotel is on the shore just opposite the superb pile of St. Michael's Mount. There has been a raging storm and it is entirely cut off from the mainland. I am happy. We are never at ease away from the sea.

"I am drooping with sleep as I hang over our little bed-sitting room fireplace. How eternally surprised they all are here that we Americans demand a living temperature in the house when we are not exercising. Our sons were thirteen several days ago. Such gay and husky travellers. Cheerful, rain or shine. O Kay, I love being married and having a household! I'm happy for you! Affectionately, Una Jeffers."

[Caldwell and Riess look at collection of photographs of the Jefferses with Colonel Wood and Sara Bard Field and other friends. Una on the beach surrounded by the boulders that Jeffers hauled up to build Tor House.]

Riess: This is a great collection. Do you want to give these to The Bancroft Library?

Caldwell: That's what I'd like to do. I infuriated a Japanese scholar one time because I wouldn't let him print these.

Riess: Why do you have these pictures?

Caldwell: My mother had them. Una has written on the back of some of them. They represent two different occasions.

Riess; Jeffers is handsome.

Caldwell: Oh, you fell in love with that man. Women were always trying to lure him away. Mabel Luhan was the one who finally got them to come visit her, you know. This is a cute picture of the boys, Garth and Donan. And here, this is Ella Winter, and Pete [Steffens].

Riess: Were Una Jeffers and your mother good women friends?

Caldwell: We never thought of them pairing off socially. I never thought of them in those terms. We more or less visited in a group. And after all, we weren't neighbors. When we'd go there we'd be going for a picnic, and it was kind of a special occasion.

This is an interesting picture. This is Lincoln Steffens, and me, and the boys, and Una and Robin and Pops [standing by Cadillac touring car].

Riess: Did you stay with the Jefferses when you went down?

Caldwell: Oh, no, not at all. We stayed with Noel Sullivan. The Jefferses didn't ever have guests overnight, as far as I know. I never heard of anybody staying with them. Maybe they did with

relatives or friends they had known longer. But we never thought in terms of staying with them. We would go and have lunch and have a daytime visit maybe for a couple of hours. And then we would go, either back to Noel Sullivan's, or the Peter Pan Inn.

Mother speaks in her oral history about staying at a place called the Peter Pan Inn, or lodge. The women who started the Carmel Bach Festival had a place called the Peter Pan Inn. And when Mother and Pops went to the Bach Festival concerts they would stay either with Noel or stay at the Peter Pan.

Riess: Una's letter suggests she had a great fondness for you.

Caldwell: Yes, well, you see, she was the one that would talk. Jeffers didn't talk to you very much. He had a few monosyllabic comments. Una was folksy, she was outgoing. Jeffers--I never thought he was in any way unfriendly, or withdrawn, he just wasn't a man of words. He was not a person with whom you had an interchange, exactly. We just accepted that.

An Evening with Dylan Thomas, 1949

Riess: Margaret Owings in her oral history describes introducing Jeffers and Dylan Thomas.¹

Caldwell: That I don't know about. I only know about Dylan Thomas at our house in Berkeley. That's all I know.

Riess: I would like to hear that story. That was when?

Caldwell: That was during the loyalty oath controversy. That had to be 1949.

My husband was very much involved with it [loyalty oath controversy] for a long time and held out for a long time, and there were frantic meetings, meetings all the time. The non-signers--and there were about twenty-nine, I think--were getting together and planning their strategy. And my husband was under frightful pressure because while he eventually did sign he didn't want to at all, and he was working with the non-signers.

¹ pp. 255-256, Margaret Wentworth Owings, Artist, and Wildlife and Environmental Defender, Regional Oral History Office, UC Berkeley, 1991.

At that point Jim was chairman of the English department, for the summer--this was in the summer--and Dylan Thomas was scheduled to give a reading. Before he came to our house he [Dylan Thomas] had made an appointment with Jim, to meet him to talk about the details of the lecture, where it would be and all of that, and he broke the appointment. Jim had had to leave a strategic loyalty oath conference in order to meet Thomas, who was a no-show. He was a no-show with everybody; everybody was infuriated with him. Even for a dinner party that Mark Schorer had given for him he was a no-show.

But Jim was beside himself with rage because he had left this important loyalty oath meeting. And remembering that Thomas's last appearance, which I think was at Princeton, he was so drunk that he had fallen down, Jim wanted to talk to him and wanted to be sure he would be sober. He spoke to him very severely.

Then, because Jim was to introduce him, we invited him to dinner. Mark Schorer was out of town, and Jim was taking his place as chairman, so there was just Ruth Schorer, Jim Caldwell, Dylan Thomas, and myself at the dinner. The conversation simply didn't flow at all. The only responses Dylan Thomas would make were, "Oh, yes, is it so." "Is it so." "Oh, yes." Absolutely nothing but that kind of meaningless, if you can call it response. It was a most unpleasant occasion.

Then we went down to the campus and we found that the room which was assigned to Dylan Thomas had been filled maybe two hours earlier, and there was a line, heaven knows how long, trying to get into this rather small lecture hall. The large Wheeler Hall auditorium had a very famous archaeologist, art historian, who was lecturing there with a handful of people, embarrassingly few. So they switched. And Wheeler Auditorium filled up just in no time at all with admirers of Thomas.

Ruth Schorer and I sat down rather close to the front, waiting for the introduction, and Jim gave, of course, a very gracious introduction. And then Dylan Thomas took an enormous breath--we were sitting in about the fourth row and we could hear this great intake of breath--and as he exhaled he said, "Do not go gently into that good night..."

His recitation of the poem was so beautiful, and he didn't make any prefatory remarks; he didn't acknowledge the person who had introduced him, or that he was at the University of California or anything. He simply plunged into the "spouting," as Jim would have said, of his poetry. And it was so moving that we forgot any hostility, or lack of approval we might have had of him. I never can imagine anybody reading with such

fervor and depth. And he had the whole auditorium just so still, you know.

After it was over there was a group of students waiting to entertain him. And we learned that he simply loathed being with faculty, that he couldn't wait to go with these far-out graduate students, who took him off to a party. And that's my story about Dylan Thomas.

I must say that he was cold sober for the reading. To my surprise, Tom Parkinson, who also comments on Dylan Thomas's appearance here--not at our house--says quite mistakenly that he was drunk, but he was not. And for the reasons I have given you, I knew perfectly well that he was just as sober as you could possibly wish. [Dylan Thomas did visit Berkeley again. JRKK]

But I feel sorry to have to say that, because Jim was usually such a sympathetic person, but he was overwrought with the anxiety of the loyalty oath. In retrospect I feel sorry that this hostility existed. But he was exercising his responsibility as a department chairman and getting that speaker on the stage in a state where he could actually communicate.

The Loyalty Oath

Riess: About the loyalty oath, because Jim was on the ACLU board, did that complicate his thinking? And that he represented something more than himself?

Caldwell: Oh, I think you are right about that, I think that intensified his anxiety about signing the oath. Did you want to talk about the oath?

Riess: Yes.

Caldwell: The thing of it was that he was such a hard-working member of the group opposing the Regents. And I think nobody could ever believe that the Regents would take such an attitude toward the faculty, but they did.

Riess: Jim was in [Edward Chase] Tolman's group.

Caldwell: Yes, he and Tolman were dear friends. He was definitely a member of Tolman's group. And Tolman was simply wonderful--Muscantine was in that group too, of non-signers--you couldn't imagine anybody more understanding.

When Jim finally, at the very end, defected from the group and signed, nobody could have been more understanding than Tolman. He said, "After all, Jim, most of us in this group have independent means, and it's easy for us." He just said everything you could possibly think of trying to ease the pain that Jim had in making this decision.

Riess: You and Jim had talked about what it would mean if he signed.

Caldwell: Well, he worried very much about the economic side, but I think that wasn't the fundamental reason that he didn't do it.

I forgot to say that George Stewart was influential in Jim's making the decision to sign. George Stewart was older than Jim--I think he was retired--and to my great annoyance--. I didn't want Jim to sign, and neither did the children--though it was easy enough for us, of course, to take that view, we didn't have economic responsibility for the family.

In any case, George used to annoy me--but I was fond of George personally--because he used to come down and sort of turn up late morning or early afternoon to talk to Jim and try to--. He said, "Jim, you should sign it because you can have much more influence within the faculty, staying on the faculty, to get rid of the loyalty oath."

That was Stewart's line, that it isn't that you just supinely accept the fact that this indignity had been put upon the faculty, but you would be able more effectively to eliminate it by staying on. And you know, he [Stewart] wrote that book called The Year of the Oath. This, of course, was a kind of rationalization for Jim, I suppose we might call it, for signing it. He did provide a lot--Jim did provide a lot--of material for Stewart's book on the oath.

Riess: Sounds like the English department was a real crucible.

Caldwell: Yes, that is really true. Of course there were other departments, and there were all kinds of subterfuges. I heard there was one young man in the oriental languages department and the faculty would employ him under the table, so to speak, as a TA. They'd pay him out of their own pockets. He was a non-signer and he had lost his income, so his colleagues took it upon themselves to pay him.

Riess: Ben Lehman said in his oral history, "Too much fuss about academic freedom."

Caldwell: That, of course, infuriated Jim. The thing of it is, because Jim felt so strongly about this and held out for so long, I have always thought that this did more to undermine his health and contribute to his heart trouble than anything. His whole life, his health was undermined by the strain of all of this. That's my view. I don't mean that any doctor ever said that. My daughter agrees with this, that the strain was just too much.

Riess: Did he lose friends over it?

Caldwell: There was a coldness that developed with one or two friends who had signed and felt that it was not the right thing for the non-signers to take the point of view that they had taken. Ed Strong--Jim and Ed Strong, we had a very close friendship with them, they used to come up to our mountain cabin with their family, and their children and our children would play together. And there was a coldness that developed there.

Riess: How about for you? Did you stand back?

Caldwell: [laughs] You know, I was so upset that Jim did sign it that--. But on the other hand, he was the one that had the responsibility. It wasn't anything that we had any kind of difficulty about talking about, but I was very disappointed.

Riess: With the liberal background you came from.

Caldwell: Yes, it seemed a terrible thing. But I also felt sorry for him and realized the pressures on him. We talked about it, and I said I'd be willing to take the consequences of not signing--and it was interesting that the children, even Dan, got interested in this--he was so much younger, I mean.

Riess: Did they pick it up at school? Or was it listening at home?

Caldwell: Listening to us talk. That's interesting. I don't think that they ever talked about it with their little friends. Though after all, they were pretty grown up.

A Woman's Place. Women Friends

Caldwell: I have to say, for all the atmosphere of equality between men and women with which I was brought up, my feeling about Jim's profession was that it was his world, and I didn't enter into it. Maybe it was partly because I did have my own profession,

but also I felt that this was something that had to be respected--Jim's decision and his life on campus.

In those days, even in the English department, the attitude was that--women can't believe it now, I'm sure--that the woman's sphere was domestic. It was very old-fashioned. One of the reasons that Jim and I never had the members of just one department, the English department, as guests at a dinner party, was so that it wouldn't become, as Jim would say, a department meeting.

Jim did not approve of a social occasion being turned into a localized departmental gathering. So many parties I went to at that time, at other people's houses, the men--they didn't go into another room, as they did earlier on, excusing themselves from the ladies to have coffee and brandy, but they did group themselves in one part of the room, separate. The women supposedly were talking about recipes--it makes me think of how Hillary [Rodham Clinton] was pilloried--and bargains in the stores and so on.

That wasn't, of course, universally true, and our little group within the English department with a number of people, the Clines and Bronsons, that group always was completely gathered together on an equal basis. We felt very superior and advanced compared to all the old fogies. That was an interesting point, and I think that was what set aside this small more advanced, more modern group within the English department to which Jim belonged.

I think also that they [the group] were somewhat resented; they felt we were being very elitist and withdrawn from the rest. There was a little feeling of--I don't know whether it was jealousy or hostility or what, but anyway, we were quite definitely separated out as a group within the English department, a sort of coterie.

Riess: The group you had lunch with, the Sanfords and Rowellses, would they have been included?

Caldwell: As husbands and wives, yes. The Sanfords--their daughter, incidentally, lives here in town now, and I was talking with her yesterday about her mother--Christine Sanford was a very strong character, stronger than any woman you have ever known in your life. She's the one, she and Margaret Rowell, had these women's lunches that I think you are referring to.

Riess: Nevitt Sanford was a non-signer. I wondered whether you talked about that oath at the lunches.

Caldwell: We probably did talk about it, but it doesn't stand out in my mind. My feelings were so intense about Jim's part in this, and the reputation of the University, the way we had always loved the University. All of those things, those feelings were much stronger than any discussion of it outside the house.

Riess: With that group of women, you wouldn't have been talking about recipes? What would you talk about?

Caldwell: Oh no, we were a--a bluestocking group you would have called it in New England. And we had a lot in common, because we talked about ideas, and books, and politics. We were drawn together. It was just a natural attraction.

Kathleen Tolman, she was an extremely important person in my life--I have always admired her, over and above the fact that she was the wife of the man who led the loyalty oath.

We would argue. Christine Sanford was such a strong personality. I remember a time one of the women went home in tears, just left in the middle of the group. Christine was a steamroller personality. Jim Caldwell, when he first met her he couldn't stand her. Then he grew, as everybody else did, to be an ardent admirer of her. There was nothing that she wouldn't say if she thought it. And she not only would disagree, but she wouldn't let go of the argument.

I remember one time going to a dinner party at the Sanford's and the guest of honor was a clergyman, and he just mentioned, in the course of the conversation, that he had changed from the King James version of the Bible to the modern one. Christine Sanford was simply furious. She would not drop it for the entire evening. She simply tore him to pieces. And he was her guest, you know. [laughter] But somehow or other her honesty and her essential good nature weighed favorably in her favor.

Josephine Miles

Riess: We were talking about women in the English department. Was Josephine Miles there?

Caldwell: Oh, that was much later, much later. Well, not all that much later, because actually, when she came, Jim was teaching the poetry course.

She was a graduate student, and I'll never forget the first time I saw Josephine. We used to have Jim's students in socially, oftentimes, at our house, instead of meeting on the campus. She was brought in--carried in, of course, and that's something you can't avoid being curious about--and then everybody read their poetry before Josephine.

I was terribly, terribly tired--I guess my daughter then was a baby--but then all of a sudden Josephine read, and it was electrifying. Even then, as a graduate student, her poetry was so outstanding that it just brought you to life to hear her. I was so impressed by her. That was my first memory of Josephine as a graduate student, and how remarkably alive her poetry was.

Riess: Was it the delivery, or the person--?

Caldwell: Oh, no, no, her delivery was very bad. Jim used to tell her that. She didn't have to do this on account of her disability, but she put her head down and kind of mumbled her words. Jim used to tell her she should speak out.

Riess: Tell me more about Josephine Miles.

Caldwell: Josephine Miles was a person who, by her own observation, was limited in her experience of life. She couldn't have love, she couldn't have freedom of movement to travel to the great capitals of Europe or anything. She was limited, but to her own amazement, and her own observation, young people would spill out to her all their marital problems, their anxieties about their Ph.D.s--of course she knew about that--whatever. They would tell her the intimate details of their lives and expect her to make comment.

She would say, "Here I am, unable ever to experience the kind of experiences they have, but they seem to want my counsel." That's because she was such a wonderful listener. She just loved people, and it didn't matter whether it was the passing plumber or gardener, or some visitor from Oxford. She could absorb, experience, through other people more intently than anyone I've ever known.

Because of her way of living in the world she couldn't physically experience the experiences of others, and therefore she concentrated her whole being on listening to them. And so you can imagine--everyone likes to hear themselves talk, but these young students, can you imagine, with all their pressing problems? During the Depression--she was always very hospitable, and she always offered some kind of nourishment, food and drink--during the Depression these students would

hungrily grab for the food and nourish themselves on what they were offered. She mentioned this quite often, how hungry they were. Obviously because they had nothing to spend on food.

I've never known anyone who was able to listen, whether it was to a personal account of a problem, or whether it was a highly reasoned intellectual argument, like Josephine. She'd kind of half-close her eyes when somebody was giving a lecture. One time there was a philosopher whom everyone found difficult to understand, and Josephine, quietly half-closing her eyes and concentrating, asked the most pertinent questions, but not in technical language. Other people would rather pretentiously phrase their questions in such a way that it sounded as if they were well-versed in the speaker's views, but Josephine in the most simple language would put her finger right on the most important topic. Amazing mind.

Her mother should be given unlimited praise for the way she handled her daughter's disability. And there was never any sense, around Josephine, that you should not mention her affliction. I remember once when Josephine was being carried through my garden, some kids next door said, "What's the matter with you?" She said, "Well, my legs don't work very well."

She never felt any defense or apology for her condition, because her mother had established the pattern in the household of accepting the situation. She was born, you know, completely normal. The first four years of her life she was a normal child, and then this dreadful affliction overcame her.

Jim Caldwell's Teaching, and His Personality

Riess: You said Jim taught poetry then?

Caldwell: Yes. At that time he did. Later on he was glad to give up the poetry class. When Josephine became a member of the faculty, he was very, very glad to turn it over to her.

Riess: What are the thorny aspects of teaching the poetry class?

Caldwell: I really shouldn't comment on that very much, because I've never taught it, but I think it's just more difficult to present.

Riess: His qualities as a teacher from the In Memoriam statement were interesting to me. It reads, "The great characteristic of the poetic state, he taught, was a special freedom and richness of

feeling, a great and bold marshalling of consciousness. Poetry is a great act of emancipation, which is still an act of infinitely complex and firm control. Maximal freedom, and the maximum order--can we not turn back to life for this value, leaving all possible room for that difference between the consciousness of art and the mind of life?"

Riess: You lived in the midst of people who believed in poetry.

Caldwell: Yes, that is true. Although I have to say that when it came to interaction with the students, to me I was very separated from them, except these occasions when they would come to the house. I think it was also because I was so enormously involved in my own work. So my association with Jim intellectually on the poetic side was more in connection with his own writing rather than with his teaching of it. I just knew he was enormously appreciated as a teacher, and to this day I'll meet people every now and then who say, "He is my most vivid memory as a teacher, and I'll never forget him," and that kind of thing.

When Jim died, I had many, many letters, a couple of hundred letters. Every one of the letters, whether from young or old, "He was my best friend." He gave a great deal of personal attention to his students. I was always sorry he didn't write more himself. He only published one slight volume of poetry. It was published by Indiana University Press.

Riess: Did he and Sara talk a lot about poetry?

Caldwell: Mostly about her poetry, and when Colonel Wood was alive, about his.

Come to think of it, that was one thing about Jim that was quite interesting: he always drew out other people, gave himself to other people. I remember once--. He was a great friend of Albert Elkus who was chairman of the music department for some years, a charming, wonderful man. I don't think the oral history program had been instituted, and so you probably didn't have Albert's wonderful contributions.

But Jim and Albert had lunch together quite frequently, as did Meiklejohn and Jim. When Jim would come home, he was always talking about Albert's projects or Meiklejohn's projects, and I once said to him, "Do they ever ask you about what you're thinking and what you're doing?" "Oh," he said, "I never thought of that. No, I don't believe they do."

I think that was also true in respect to my mother and stepfather. He was involved in what they were doing, not that

they weren't interested in what he did, but he was so remarkable a person to draw others out about what they were focusing on. It makes me realize how very absorbed I was in my own art world.

The literature of England and the United States were pretty compelling for him. His interests were very disparate: the Romantic movement and John Keats, and the Middle Ages--he was interested in Gervaise of Tilbury.

Riess: And did you become interested in those interests of his?

Caldwell: I was interested in his grappling with the subject of translation, the Medieval Latin, but actually it was surprising to me that he didn't write more poetry and stay more in the field in criticism, at which he was excellent. I found it hard, and so did his friends, to understand why he immersed himself in the Middle Ages at that stage of his life.

Riess: Did writing poetry come easily for him?

Caldwell: Oh no. I don't think it does to anyone. My experience with poets is that it is a very, very slow birth.

Riess: Did emotions come easily to him?

Caldwell: Oh yes, very definitely so.

Riess: How was it for you and Jim, two professionals, did you find time to discuss your work together?

Caldwell: I so seldom mention my home life, but actually I was only a part time worker. I bought the groceries and cooked the meals, and we had dinner together. And because I was a part time worker I was at home a lot of the daytime too. I was not away from home when my children came home from school, and I was very much interested in what they were doing. I took them to museums. It took more with my daughter than with my son.

We always had dinner together as a family, and it was always a very lively kind of an interchange. We entered into their lives very, very fully. We were interested in their experiences in school, and in their friendships, and in their anguish, as most children have in their adolescent years in school, and their failures and their triumphs. Very much so, we just loved those children. And of course in the summer we had the six weeks together in the High Sierra where we were just the family, fishing and hiking.

The lessons--in Berkeley Sara took piano lessons with Estelle Caen, who was the sister of Herb Caen. And Dan took cello lessons, as you know, with Margaret Rowell. And then Dan studied with Gabor Rejto, who was living at Yehudi Menuhin's, so when we were down at Los Gatos I would take him to Rejto's classes, which were so fascinating I couldn't resist staying to listen to his teaching. We were very much involved with our children.

And Jim was a wonderful listener. Anything that had to do with my relationship to my students, or Mills College, fine, the details of my profession, no. But that doesn't mean he wasn't interested. And he was extremely pleased when I got the job there. I think he was proud of my ability to do these things, which might not have been true of many husbands at that time. He was a generous person, and very caring, and I think whatever made me happy, he was happy to share in that happiness. It never occurred to me to feel in any way offended if he didn't want to know about Japanese or Chinese art. That was my world, and he respected it.

And I don't think that was a general attitude on the part of husbands at that time. Now it is just assumed. I ought to make a declaration of praise to my husband for his cooperation in anything I wanted to do. Because he was criticized for having a wife who--. I was criticized, and he was criticized I think for tolerating [my professional life]. As I have mentioned earlier, in those days married women were housewives and mothers. They were not professional.

Riess: You had women friends who were professionals. Margaret Rowell. Her husband forbade her performing publicly after their marriage.

Caldwell: Yes, but my husband's colleagues' wives were not, and those were my age group.

Riess: And they didn't have children.

Caldwell: Yes. They said it was economic. Those women were very intelligent and well-read people, you know. I think they felt sorry for Jim with this wife! But I never--even in those days there was plenty of packaged food, but we never had packaged food, I always put on a good meal. It's nice to cook. I enjoy cooking.

Having Children

Caldwell: You haven't really asked me about the children, and of course that was such an important part of my life. I would hate to have anybody reading and think, "Didn't she ever care about her children?" It was an absolute obsession.

Riess: Tell me more about them. When were they born?

Caldwell: Dan was born in '36, and Sara in '32. He was four years younger.

Riess: And was this planned, the spacing?

Caldwell: Well, we didn't think about it very much, and actually I was sort of surprised when I was pregnant with Sara. I was on a boat up the Sacramento River with some neighbors who became very dear friends, and was a little bit sick to my stomach, and thought that it was the boat. But it turned out to not be that. Neither of the children were planned, but we were very happy to have them. We'd always expected we'd have children, but just didn't settle down and say, "Now, we're going to decide to have them."

But then I was completely absorbed, absolutely absorbed in maternity--buying clothes, talking to other people who had children about it, and so on. I was absolutely derailed for a while from any kind of intellectual life.

Riess: You were very absorbed in your children.

Caldwell: I certainly was, and I took a long time out when they were born, I didn't work.

I nursed both my children, Sara not so long, because we had a dreadful nurse who said she wasn't getting enough nourishment, which wasn't true. Well, she was fired from this association of nurses or whatever for having done this. She was dreadful, a martinet, quite a military person.

When I was in the hospital with Sara I insisted on nursing her, but those were the days when nurses wanted to line the babies up and stick a bottle in every baby's mouth, and then they could see very easily how much milk had been consumed, and I had a very hard time maintaining my principles. I had a highly enlightened woman pediatrician at that time who believed in breast-feeding, but it was not done. It was just not done.



Katherine Caldwell with her daughter
Sara, 1933.

Photograph by Cedric Wright





Katherine Caldwell and Sara Bard Field photographed in Berkeley, circa 1945.

Photograph by Cedric Wright



Daniel Ralston Caldwell, circa 1953.

Photograph by Carol Baldwin

Riess: How was your mother Sara as a grandmother? Was she involved?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, particularly with my daughter, who was named for her. She thought there was nobody in the world quite as wonderful--except Colonel Wood, and my late brother. [laughs] They were her great loves: Colonel Wood, my brother, and my daughter Sara.

Riess: You were in Berkeley and they were in Los Gatos.

Caldwell: We would go there quite frequently, I would say maybe once a month. That may be a little exaggerated, because when Jim was teaching, I'm sure we didn't go down in the wintertime.

Riess: You said your friends were not having children?

Caldwell: No, salaries were so low that people just didn't have children, in the English department, anyway. The Clines and the Bronsons, none of these people, the Rosses, none of them had children. This was an oddity to them, to have a friend that had a child.

Riess: Really? You mean not until later?

Caldwell: Not at all. As a matter of fact, that's an interesting thing, because I never held a baby in my life until my daughter was born. The women I knew among my mother's friends who, if they had a child or wanted a child, maybe they had one child. But they were in despair. "What can we do with a child?" Meaning, "I want to write," or "I want to paint," or something.

Riess: The view was that they were sort of a handicap?

Caldwell: Yes. My mother's sister, Mary Parton, who had her association with Clarence Darrow, and then married a perfectly charming man, a newspaper man, she had one child, whose life was very, very difficult, because this child had to be fitted into my aunt's intensely intellectual life.

I never grew up in association with people who had "normal," just plain American family situations. Either they had none at all, my friends, or were artistic and literary people for whom a child was--the child was wanted but always a problem.

Riess: I think that that's sad.

Caldwell: I do too. I was utterly and completely--I couldn't think about anything else before Sara was born but babies, talked to women that had babies, read books. Unfortunately I had a very, very

pre-Dr. Spock book which gave you all the wrong advice about bringing up a baby, and that was too bad. The idea was, the baby should be left alone almost all the time, and one hour a day would be allocated for your playing with the baby, and I used to wait looking at my watch for that time.

Those days when the children were very small were very hard for me because I was used to so much more stimulus. I really feel sorry now that I couldn't enjoy completely, as my friends in their thirties, they take time out from their careers just to devote to their babies. None of my friends did either, the ones that had children--not necessarily here in Berkeley--who had jobs. They all had that feeling that they mustn't get out of touch with their work.

I don't think I got the pleasure out of being the mother of an infant that I could have. I now look at these women making this wonderful bonding with their babies. My friends now in their thirties are so much better mothers than any of us in our twenties. I was torn. I wanted the children, and I loved them, but I was torn between loving them and wanting to get back to my job.

I have regrets about having been split in my interest at that time, many regrets. I didn't have any natural ideas about--I hadn't been with women who took children in their stride, you know? Later on, I did.

Riess: The women who didn't have babies, did they have careers?

Caldwell: Well, no, they didn't, as a matter of fact. Interestingly enough, they didn't have careers. I never thought of that before. Mildred Bronson, Jane Cline, Nancy Ross--none of them had. Although Nancy Ross--actually she had been a T.A. in the English department, I believe, at one time. But she didn't carry that on, and of course, at that time, husband and wife wouldn't be allowed to have a job in the same institution.

And even more interesting is the change in the University. In one department here, there's a husband and wife in the Japanese literature, both not only in the same department, but in the same field of research. It's fascinating, the right-about-face in the University in regard to that.

Riess: It used to thwart so many couples.

Caldwell: Yes, it did. That's right. But no, these women, they read a lot, or they--I don't know what they did, really! [laughs]

Because my own life when I was working and being a housewife was so organized, and full.

Riess: Did you have a nurse or a live-in?

Caldwell: Oh, no. No, only later--at one time, in the depth of the Depression, we had a marvelous woman who was utterly destitute, the way people are now. She was an uneducated woman, but a marvelous human being. She lived with us for a while, and had her room and board with us, and a slight salary. But that was the only time. Mostly we managed without any kind of help.

And oh, yes, I had a housecleaner, the minute I got a job. I loved gardening, and I loved cooking, but I loathed cleaning. The minute I got a job, I bought a vacuum cleaner, and hired somebody to clean my house.

Riess: Actually, at the depths of the Depression, Robert Gordon Sproul I think asked the faculty to take a salary cut. I suppose that sort of curtailed plans for a family for some.

Caldwell: Yes, I have been told that the fact that people didn't have children was because the salaries were so low.

My mother and stepfather were very generous to Jim and me. They gave me a small allowance monthly, and then when I had a job over at the Legion of Honor, my stepfather bought me a little old second-hand car to get there. So in those ways very helpful.

Riess: In other words, they didn't see any point in your struggling.

Caldwell: No. On the other hand, we were pretty much on our own, when we bought the house, for example.

A High Sierra Retreat. Woods Lake

Riess: Los Gatos must have been a powerful attraction as a getaway.

Caldwell: You mean when we went there? Oh, yes, it was another home. And actually, I have to say they [Sara and Pops] came quite often to Berkeley, particularly when we were over on Tamalpais Road. But of course, it [The Cats] was wonderful. And the woman that worked for Mother and Pops just adored our children, and we could leave our children there and go off on a vacation. That's

"For Old Friends' New Fireplace"

By Marie Welch, for the
Caldwells at Woods Lake, on
completion of their
fireplace

A blessing upon the stones
A blessing upon the flue
A blessing upon the pine logs
And upon the pine cones
And upon you.

A blessing upon the spark
And upon the flame-rise
A blessing upon the dark
And upon the flame-fall
Into the shining dark
And upon us all.

what we did one time when we found our own little place up in the High Sierra.

Riess: What kind of a little place was that?

Caldwell: Oh, a dream place. You see, for all that Mother and Pops were very generous, on the other hand we were really on our own, and we couldn't afford to go away, being on a very slim budget. When we found that there were lands that the government rented out in the High Sierra, we parked the children with Mary and Vincent and Mother and Pops, and went off with a map of the various places, and we found this heavenly place at Carson Pass, at about 8,000 feet.

True to the Caldwells having off-street places to live, we found a beautiful piece of land right on a little lake called Woods Lake, with a beautiful stream pouring into it. Could you reach it by car? No, you had to walk a quarter of a mile to the house. Of course, we didn't have any house then, it was just a piece of land. And \$15 a year for the land, at that time!

There were only five building places on this lake, because it's marshy. The only other house near us belonged to some hunters that came at the season of the year we didn't come at all, so we had this whole shore to ourselves. We were obliged by the government requirements to build a house of \$500 worth, and the money that I earned at the fair [1939-1940, Treasure Island] as a docent was what paid for the lumber and cement for the cabin up at Woods Lake.

Riess: There was a requirement that you had to put in \$500 worth of improvements?

Caldwell: That's right. And we couldn't build it ourselves, so we had people up from Tahoe.

But there is an interesting connection with the Wood family. One of Colonel Wood's granddaughters was at that point graduating in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. [Joseph] Esherick, who's so famous on the Berkeley campus here, was her husband then. They had just graduated, and they drew up the plans--Esherick did the plans for our cabin. They refused to take any money for it. It was the first thing they ever did. And then later we lent them the cabin; they were skiers, so they could go up in the wintertime which we couldn't.

Riess: Is it special architecturally?

Caldwell: Oh, it was beautiful. We wanted something with a low ceiling, instead of a Swiss steep-roofed cabin. Esherick said, "No

problem at all, we just cantilever it," so he made this lovely low cabin place, beautiful place. And very simple. Just one great huge room with a little alcove for the kitchen, and then three little bedrooms.

We used to love that more than anything. We'd go up every summer for six weeks. Jim would take a whole lot of work along with him, college work. And he'd fish part of the day and do scholarship another part of the day.

Riess: And you would take the children?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, that was the most fun. It's often said if you bring your children up to love nature they never get over that love of nature, and it's perfectly true. They adored it. Then we imported their friends for them, because we didn't want them to be all alone. A beautiful place.

Riess: Do you still have it?

Caldwell: Oh, no. It was most unfortunate. We had it for twenty-five years, and then Jim developed this dreadful heart trouble, and he couldn't go over 4,000 feet. I think it was the hardest thing in the world in his life, like parting with a grandchild or something, a death. He was very brave about it, very brave. But I just can't tell you what it did to him to have to part with that place. Some dear friends of ours went up with me to prepare it for sale.

My children both loved it, but you see, my son Dan's life went in another direction, and my daughter never learned to drive, and she lived in New York for so long. And it took an enormous amount of physical work just to get shutters on and off, and the rowboat out and so on. Those are just examples of the enormous work that house entailed.

Even if Jim had not developed the heart trouble, we couldn't have kept it ourselves unless we'd taken up a college student or somebody to do the heavy work. It was frightfully heavy work. I just loved it, too, and I used to work hard also up there, but age would have overwhelmed us on that.

Interestingly enough, when we had to sell it, people said, "Oh, those poor Caldwells, no electricity, no gas, no plumbing. You'll never sell it." And we only told about it by word of mouth, and the first people who came at eleven in the morning bought it at one. [laughs] Just a treasure of a place.

Riess: And you can get along without plumbing and electricity.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. We had the most wonderful outhouse that was ever, ever built! Ed Strong, who later became chancellor here, he and his wife and children used to come up and stay with us. He helped dig the hole for the lavatory, for the toilet.

You can imagine, we felt very superior to the people in Tahoe with their fashionable houses and nice clothes. We had very dear friends at Tahoe--and we were 2,000 feet higher, you see, over 8,000--and we used to take up some Tahoe clothes in a suitcase and go over to visit for a weekend. We did our shopping over in Nevada, and we loved that. We used to have dinner in the Sheepherder's Restaurant, a full dinner for a dollar, including three courses and wine. Lamb, of course.

Dan and Sara Caldwell

Riess: Now that we've gotten into the subject of your children, please go on and tell me about their lives and careers?

Caldwell: Well, Dan and Sara decided that the humanities were not for them, probably as a protest against their parents. Actually, in Dan's case, his interest in science was genuine, over and above any kind of wanting to establish his own identity. He would have gone in that direction.

First, however, as I have said, he wanted to be a cellist. That sounds like a contradiction to what I just said, but he took music very seriously, went to the Conservatory in San Francisco, and studied with Gabor Rejto, who was very famous. Then he decided he wasn't good enough for the big competitions, and also the life, because unless you're just absolutely tops there's no use to go into it, and even then, the life is one of constant travel. Dan quite wisely decided he wasn't up to that kind of thing.

Riess: Did you say he also studied with Margaret Rowell?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, dear Margaret. Yes, he did. She was a marvel. I didn't know her until I had been in Berkeley and married to Jim years and years and years. I got to know her because I had to have an operation, and I had three thromboses after and was home for months. I got tired of just reading, and I had met her, so I called her up and asked her if she had a student that could give me some cello lessons. She came right down in the next half-hour herself with a cello! We were fast friends after that.

I took just a few lessons at that time, nothing much. When I took Dan up to Margaret's he was about ten years older than Galen [Rowell]--Galen was four or so when Dan was taking lessons--and Dan was simply furious because Galen would run around the room and interrupt the lesson. Margaret would say, "Now Galen, now Galen, stop, come down off of that couch." Dan just hated Galen because of the lessons.

Well, then twenty-five years went by, and my son was at Laramie, Wyoming, teaching, and he saw a sign, "Lecture by Galen Rowell." Of course he went, and he said he just sat there laughing. Here was this beautifully organized, articulate, excellent lecturer. He hadn't seen him since he was four, rushing around, making himself a nuisance. [laughter]

Riess: Dan and Sara both went to Berkeley schools?

Caldwell: Yes, they did. And they both graduated from Berkeley High School, though there was a little interval for a year when Sara went to the Anna Head School, along with several other faculty "brats," as they were called. Then the girls decided they didn't want to be in a private school, so they rebelled and Sara eventually graduated from Berkeley High School.

I have the most wonderful records of Sara's early life in Cambridge. She started in a nursery school and then first grade in Cambridge in private school, Buckingham School. I have still a record: "This child is extremely eager and extremely bright, but she identifies herself with grownups, and the best thing you can do for her is to see she's constantly with children."

You know, we never overcame her identifying with adults. She told me one time she never, ever felt she was a child. She had a very hard time relating to her peers, because she always felt superior to them.

Riess: You could relate to that, couldn't you?

Caldwell: You mean myself? Oh, I felt superior to them [peer group] because of my life in San Francisco. But more like most adolescent girls, socially I felt very out of touch with my contemporaries.

Riess: Isn't that what Sara was feeling, too?

Caldwell: Well, I guess so. Though it seems to me she did have young friends. I know when she graduated she had an invitation to go

to the dance with a nice young man from a very respectable family in Berkeley. Up to a certain point, she seemed to have adjusted pretty well, but she remembers her adolescent years just bitterly, hated Berkeley High School, she said.

And Dan the same way. They all think it was a terrible misfortune to be children of university people. You just didn't know how to get along with other kids. Dan to this day likes the idea of just being a plain American, and not a professor's son. Even though he's a professor himself.

He didn't get into the University of California graduate school, and so he decided instead of trying to go to another graduate school he'd volunteer for the army. He was in the army for two years. Then he got his doctorate at the University of Maryland in microbiology, and eventually went to the University of Wyoming. He's a full professor there now.

Sara, after several years of thrashing around, decided she'd better do something to earn a living, and she quickly decided--rather impulsively, I think, I may be wrong about the impulsive side, but it seems so to me--to get her degree in social welfare here at Berkeley. She graduated with honors in English literature from Berkeley, by the way. She went two years to Radcliffe, and then she transferred to Berkeley, graduated with honors in English literature, and decided to reject the humanities. She could by getting a master's degree in social welfare then get a job quite easily, and that's what she did.

She's an extremely good editor. She would have been wonderful in some literary capacity. If you really want to have somebody cast a sharp, intelligent eye on anything you've written, just hand it to Sara. Now she's living across the street. She came back to California about a year ago, and after some interval of about three, four, five months, she got a very good job in San Francisco. She's working as a social worker there.

Riess: Dan is married?

Caldwell: Dan has been married twice. He had two children by his first wife. When he was in the army in Puerto Rico he married a Puerto Rican woman. She's a very honorable person, but they had absolutely nothing in common together, except their youth. Jim and I were very upset about the wedding, but they invited us to come, and we flew--we went from London back to New York and down to Puerto Rico for their marriage.

She had been more or less adopted into the home of some people from Philadelphia who were Protestants. She hated the Catholic church because her father didn't believe in the higher education of women. She had a couple of years at the University of Puerto Rico, where she supported herself. She left home--she was sort of a live-in babysitter. She had been to Philadelphia, actually, with these people.

Anyway, Dan met her while he was in the army down there. I wrote him the kind of letter that mothers write to sons in the service, about how marriage is a difficult adjustment, and if you don't marry people with whom you have lots in common, it makes it more difficult.

They were married down there in a beautiful little Protestant church. It was the most fascinating wedding, because of course she came from poverty the like of which I'd only seen in India. We insisted on going to see her parents. These Americans with whom she'd been living had never met her parents. Jim and I insisted, and of course, they couldn't speak English. Actually, they could neither read nor write, her parents, any language.

Her father was building a house with some kind of cement blocks that were handed out by the government. We saw poverty of unbelievable degradation. At the wedding, Dan's friends were all from the army, and then there were all these strange-looking ragamuffins on the other side, in clothes that didn't fit that they'd borrowed just to come. I don't mean that there's anything wrong with people because they have poor clothes on, but I mean to say people with a little more background, like Dan's--. The Americans who had befriended her, of course, were just delighted to have her make this marriage.

But it [the marriage] had a very unfortunate outcome. They had two daughters--of course, that was a very fortunate outcome--but they stayed together all too long. Finally Dan divorced Isabel. His second marriage is a dream of dreams from the point of view of the mother-in-law. I couldn't imagine a more marvelous person than the woman that Dan married the second time around.

He met her while he was on sabbatical at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. Dan is religious, the only member of the family who is, and he met her in the choir of a church. Beautiful church, by the way, 1821, a gorgeous place. She had been a widow for twelve years, had three grown children. She's just about Dan's age, and I cannot express greater admiration

for anyone than I have for this woman. The happiest marriage you can imagine.

But that's another reason why that lovely place in Woods Lake isn't accessible, you see, to Dan, because they spend their time--he goes in the summer, to Athens, Georgia, and then they come here for Christmas and so on. But there's no opportunity for them to use that beautiful Mendocino--. Oh, yes, in the course of time we used the money that we received for the sale of the land at Woods Lake to buy three acres on the Mendocino coast, which I've given to my children now so they don't have to pay inheritance tax when I die.

Riess: With a house on it?

Caldwell: No house. Jim died before we ever built anything, and I didn't feel that I'd ever use the house if I were to have built one.

Riess: What is it about being a child of academics? Why is it so hard?

Caldwell: Oh, they all hate it. They weren't ordinary Americans. They couldn't talk--they didn't look at--of course, they didn't have television then, but they didn't know--. The kind of conversation we had at home wasn't the kind of conversation their friends had at their houses. They just felt out of it, and they felt bitter about it.

Riess: And we started by your pointing out that your friends didn't even have children.

Caldwell: That is true, although by this time we had plenty of friends who had children, and we had a little play school that met at different houses five days a week. But they were all faculty children, all of them! And by this time, we had extended our acquaintance far beyond the English department, which seemed to be so dead-set against having children, and we had much wider acquaintance within the University. Not one, come to think of it, just one, I think the Stronges, were the only people who were in that--not anybody in the English department. No, not anybody. He was in philosophy.

There was one person--we knew them in Cambridge, the Binghames, Woodbridge Bingham. He and my husband came to Berkeley, got their Ph.D.s the same year at Harvard, and we came to Berkeley the same year. They were very wealthy people, and they lived in a beautiful apartment in Cambridge on the river, and we lived in what we called the "Ashcan," a little miserable apartment on Ash Street. Their children were among the children that were part of our little play group, too.

Sara Bard Field's Suicide Attempts

Riess: Somewhere in this history we need to clear up the story of your mother's suicide attempts. When, and where? Were the Marengos involved?

Caldwell: The two suicide attempts were after Pops had died. She stayed on at Los Gatos a few years after Pops died--not too long, the Marengos couldn't handle it. They also wanted to retire, because Vincent Marengo had terrible, terrible asthma as a result of pollens and what not.

Riess: What couldn't the Marengos handle?

Caldwell: They felt that she was lonely and depressed and that she should be up in Berkeley close to us. However, they were in Los Gatos for these two suicide attempts. This was all, as I said, after Pops had died. They stayed on for a while. I remember they called me up on the phone, hysterically--Vincent did--about her. "Jesus, Kay, you come down here quick, your mother took all the sleeping pills."

After the second time this happened, at Los Gatos, with the Marengos there, they, like me, were absolutely furious that Mother would do this and cause all this [misery for everyone]. They were just as angry as I was. And I remember feeling so guilty about being angry.

I went down there and had to help get her out of this. The withdrawal symptoms were simply appalling, perfectly awful, from taking all the dope. See, she took all these sleeping pills. Her whole bathroom cabinet was just full of sedatives. She had taken bottles of them, just swallowed the whole lot down. Each time. She had promised the Marengos after the first suicide attempt that she would never again accumulate this stuff. But she did. You know, like anybody with an addiction, they just can't help it.

Riess: What kind of drugs?

Caldwell: At that time--I don't know precisely, except that they were all for sleeping. Later on she got to the point where she was shooting herself with heaven knows what. When she was up here. And she would collapse, and my husband would be called at four in the morning to come over and help get her off the floor. Or the police. It was terrible.

Riess: And her doctors? Did she have a psychiatrist?

Caldwell: No, she didn't. It wasn't until I insisted on this.

Her doctor was a dear friend, and he said, "Why not let her have anything at her age," you see? The consequences for those that took care of her were appalling. And of course, it produced a character change as well, so that she was not very easy to get along with, and she had trouble with her health. All kinds of complications.

She does refer, in a letter that will be down at the Huntington, to a suicide attempt much earlier in her life. And maybe that should be referred to, because it was a pattern. It was when--I think she felt there was a time when she and Pops would never get their lives together. She had a terrible anguish about that. I don't know just when that was. But that particular letter I did send down to the Huntington.

Riess: After the two suicide attempts, did you think of some more professional care for your mother?

Caldwell: No. And she had a doctor down there, an awfully nice man, Dr. Jones, who was devoted to Mother and Pops and saw Pops through his last years, and his last hours. But it never occurred to any of them to do anything about that. And they let her have all she wanted.

Riess: How awful for you.

Caldwell: It was terrible, it was devastating.

On the way home from the second suicide attempt I was so angry. And then I felt so guilty about being so angry toward my mother, and I stopped in at the home of some wonderful friends by the name of McGiffert. The man [Arthur Cushman McGiffert] was the head of the GTU [Graduate Theological Union] down here [president of Pacific School of Religion, 1939-1945], and his wife, Elizabeth, was a dear friend, who was very sophisticated. She was older than I, but somehow or other she knew a lot about psychiatry, and she said how normal this was for me to be angry. [laughing] It almost brings tears to my eyes now to think how grateful I was to her for not faulting me for my anger toward my mother.

But it was a terrible thing, because I had been so worshipful toward my mother, and suddenly I realized that she was not the angel that I had thought, the perfect person I had thought. And of course, it was hard on her because if ever

anybody wanted adulation it was she. It was hard for her to take too. So that made a great strain between us then.

Riess: When was it that you consulted Anna Maenchen?

Caldwell: That must have been after the second suicide attempt. Anna Maenchen very sensibly saw that Mother needed a psychiatrist, somebody that was a medical person--Maenchen was a therapist, not a psychiatrist--and she sent Mother to somebody in San Francisco. [laughing] The reason I am laughing is, I then went to see the woman that Anna had sent her to, and she said to me, "Do you know what your mother is? She is a sixty-year-old baby. She wants what she wants when she wants it."

Riess: Did your mother see that psychiatrist on a regular basis?

Caldwell: No, she didn't have any therapy at all. I'm not quite sure why there was no follow-up on that, maybe they thought she was too old. But I'll never forget how surprised I was at that blunt statement on the part of that psychiatrist. It was very shocking to me, but also very helpful. Because I never criticized my mother, you see, and this was quite an eye-opener, that a professional person would make that evaluation.

Riess: When your mother was established in Berkeley did she continue to be depressed?

Caldwell: She never was happy after Pops died. She felt that her identity was with him at Los Gatos. She had a sense that their whole life there was an attraction to people of brilliance and quality. She never felt that life could be the way she wanted it to be after she left Los Gatos.

She had a lovely little house--it was destroyed by the freeway--in East Oakland. For a little while she had a nice life there, she entertained and so on. But when she moved away from there she was terribly depressed. She wanted to be near us, and we felt she should be, but the only house we could find on one floor was this house here [gesturing]. It was such a coup to find a house in this neighborhood on one floor, you know, but she always hated the house, hated everything.

Riess: Where was the house?

Caldwell: You can't see it from here, but it's just three doors away, on Hawthorne Terrace.

Riess: You had her by your side.

Caldwell: Oh yes, for ten years she lived there, until she died. And she died in that house.

I used to go see her all the time. I'll never forget, after Jim's death when I went to a psychiatrist it didn't help me at all [about Jim], but it did help about my mother. I said that my mother didn't seem to feel that I did enough for her. And he said, "How often do you go to see her?" I said, "Oh, about five times a week." [laughs] "Oh," he said, "how shocking! You shouldn't be--!" So, instead of getting any help on grieving for Jim, I got great help from the psychiatrist on my relationship with my mother.

VI CAREER: TEACHING ASIAN ART

The Legion of Honor Job: Directors

Riess: How did you get the job lecturing at the Palace of the Legion of Honor?

Caldwell: I had the master's degree from Harvard, and had taken a museum course, the first ever given on the subject. And actually, I simply applied for this. I don't think there was any influence involved in this, through my stepfather. He did know the people on the board of trustees out there. But on the other hand, they needed somebody, and my credentials were good.

And that kind of job, you just did everything. In those days, the staff was so small, you did everything from newspaper work to supervising the hanging of pictures, and lecturing.

Riess: The Palace of the Legion of Honor was built--

Caldwell: By Mrs. [Alma de Bretteville] Spreckels, to be a reproduction of the Palais de la Legion d'Honneur in France. She wanted it to be the first thing people saw coming through the Golden Gate.

Did I tell you about that awful situation when I was at Harvard and their needing a new director of the Legion of Honor, because they'd had such dreadful people, dope fiends and whatnot before, who weren't doing their job? I don't want to repeat this. [tape interruption]

For a while, both the de Young and the Legion of Honor were under the same directorship as they are now [in 1971 the two institutions were placed under one governing head], but I think the people who are in charge now think they're the first ones that ever united those two. It wasn't true.

Lloyd Rollins was the name of this man who was brought in so unfortunately, by the way. He made it very difficult for anybody who was not gay--we didn't use the word gay then--to have an exhibition, because he'd favor his friends. That's the kind of harm that he did. And for the guards in the museum he would employ his friends, and he'd use them for personal parties at home, on city money.

Finally, he had some dreadful death, I think. If I'm not mistaken, he was intoxicated and sort of fell in the street. But it was a very, very, very bad situation. He brought in Thomas Carr Howe, who succeeded him. I'm smiling, because Tommy Howe was also part of the same group at Harvard. But Tommy Howe became so famous in San Francisco society at the time, and seeing what had happened to Rollins, he married a woman of very great wealth, and had a child by her. So he made it impossible to criticize him.

Anyway [laughs], all that mess I was in.

Subsequent to the Legion of Honor, I worked at the de Young, and then after that with Grace Morley.

Riess: According to your resumé you were a lecturer at the San Francisco Museum of Art from 1934 to 1940.

Caldwell: Yes, I was there at the time of the fair of '39 and '40.

Riess: And you were a lecturer at the Palace of the Legion of Honor from '30 to '32.

Caldwell: Then I worked at the de Young Museum in between that, for a little while. It was in that order: Legion, de Young, Museum of Modern Art. I remember I was pregnant with Dan [born 1936] when I was working at the de Young. And it was after that [sic] that I went to the San Francisco Museum--we just called it the San Francisco Museum of Art at that time, by the way, "Modern" was added later.

Treasure Island Fair, Arts of the Pacific

Caldwell: At the time of the '39-'40 International Exposition on Treasure Island, my great teacher Langdon Warner had a two-year leave of absence from Harvard to put on this extraordinary exhibition called Arts of the Pacific, meaning that every country bordering the Pacific Ocean was represented, but of course China and Japan were most heavily represented.

Riess: Langdon Warner out here for the two years?

Caldwell: Yes, he had a house on Roble Road, a beautiful house on Roble Road. He gave his entire attention--he of course had to spend some of the time of his absence from Harvard by assembling all this material. Japanese art was his specialty.

So then I lectured there all during the fair.

Riess: Was it a slide lecture?

Caldwell: No. I was a docent, actually. I did use slides. There was a little theater there where one could use slides, and if I ever had children, which I usually avoided because I didn't think I could do very well with them, I would use slides of maybe five pictures from different parts of the museum, and ask them who could go and find the picture first, that kind of thing. But mostly it was with adults, and it was actually taking docent groups.

Riess: Did they make an appointment, or would you just be there?

Caldwell: I was on the staff, I worked full time. There were scheduled lectures and lectures to private groups, made by appointment.

Riess: Were there other docents for the Fair?

Caldwell: I hired one other person, John Forbes, to take over the Western part. Actually he was the father of the awfully nice woman whose married name I can't think of right now who is in charge of the Triptych, the little bulletin that they get out for all the [Fine Arts] museums. They [the Fair] had a spectacular collection, some of the great masterpieces of European art, Raphael's "Madonna of the Chair," and Botticelli's "Venus Rising from the Sea" as examples, and Rembrandt and so on.

To me it was, of course, a bonanza to have all these great works of art, and to be lecturing with the approval of Langdon Warner, my great teacher. But people in the San Francisco Bay Area knew nothing, but nothing, about Asian art. And how could you look at a Chinese bronze or even a Chinese painting appreciatively without any background at all?

That fair was the Golden Gate International Exposition, and the reason so little attention has been paid to it, you see, is that it ended just before the outbreak of World War II when all this anti-Japanese feeling arose. Some of the Japanese in Japan who had lent things there were arrested for having dealt with "the enemy," you know, and so on. It was a very, very bad time.

Anyway, first I lectured on both the East and West, and that was too much for me to handle, so I hired that man to take the Western part and devoted myself entirely to the East. I would take groups by appointment--organizations would call and make appointments--or there were regular scheduled tours. And when I say tours, I didn't do the whole collection at once, I took different periods and different countries.

Riess: In that short period of time how did you bridge the gap of ignorance?

Caldwell: Well, I think the few that came, the relatively few, to the Eastern side had some interest in knowing. They had at least lived in San Francisco and knew Chinatown--which, of course, they didn't realize was not an opportunity to see great art.

But anyhow, I think it was a very good training period for me in presenting unfamiliar material to the public, as I look back on it now. I felt like a missionary, you know. That was really a crusade.

Riess: Was there any Asian art at the de Young then?

Caldwell: Oh, very little, and very, very insignificant.

Riess: And did the de Young have a docent program of their own?

Caldwell: No, that was all much later. The whole idea of docentry came into the museum world much, much later.

Riess: In any event, your public was sympathetic?

Caldwell: Oh, they were mostly educated people. And of course, there were some that cared.

Not very long ago, three or four years ago, they had a meeting on Treasure Island organized by Professor Burton Benedict here in the anthropology department at Berkeley, recapitulating the arts on Treasure Island. I was asked to speak, and the theme that I used was the contrast between the utter blank in people's minds in the San Francisco area about Asian art then, and now since the acquisition of the Brundage Collection and its excellent docent program--the change that had occurred in those years.

I used examples. I showed in the slides in that lecture the marvelous things, priceless works of art, that never had been seen before or since in the United States, that were examples of the highest quality of Asian art that were there [at

Treasure Island] at that time, but that very few people knew what they were, and I talked about how much that situation has changed as a result of the programs at the Asian Art Museum.

Riess: The priceless things that were there at the time of the fair, Langdon Warner was able to borrow them?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, he knew everyone, you know. And he got permission because he just knew everyone. Most of the things that were so very priceless were from England.

Riess: Not from the Orient?

Caldwell: Some, but not all. That's another thing. The English, the French, and the Americans, have enthusiastically and intelligently, because of a certain few knowledgeable people, collected Chinese art particularly. And he got things--. One of the great collections of Chinese ceramics in the world is in London, it's called the David Collection, and they had never allowed any of their pieces to come to the United States before. Here were these great things to see.

You can study Chinese art in America very well in many ways. I mean to say, obviously not the richness of China, but the accessibility--it's so hard to see anything in many cases in Chinese museums, for example. But the Freer Gallery in Washington has one of the greatest collections in the world of Chinese bronzes. Cleveland, and Seattle, have wonderful things in Japanese art. One of the greatest collections of Chinese paintings in the world is in Kansas City. And so on. So there are plenty of places in this country where Chinese art was intelligently acquired and with great connoisseurship.

Riess: And predating the Fair.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. The joke of it was that San Francisco always felt it was the Gateway to the Orient, and so here they were, most ill-prepared to understand what great Asian art was about. They thought that Chinatown represented Chinese art. And while there are charming things there, they weren't museum quality things, except from time to time.

Gump's, of course, had some. They greatly exaggerated their expertise on their holdings, but occasionally they had some very beautiful things. And there were some Japanese dealers who had beautiful Chinese things, like the friend I spoke of earlier, Mr. Shiota.

About Elizabeth Huff, Alfred Salmony, Albert Bender, and Mills College

Riess: In Elizabeth Huff's oral history she says she met you through Langdon Warner.

Caldwell: She came out to Mills College to study under a great Chinese art scholar, Alfred Salmony, a German. I think she got her master's degree at Mills College, largely drawn there by this great scholar, Alfred Salmony, who was teaching Chinese art there. I became--I will talk about Elizabeth first, and then a spinoff from that, but it is part of that whole question. I used to go and audit Salmony's classes, though Dan was just a baby then.

I became very fond of Elizabeth, and found that she was a very depressed person, and I was so distressed about her depressions that I would invite her to our house. Jim liked her, too. She was a bit of an acerbic person, but if you got to know her, you liked her. I thought she was remarkable, but I just worried about her. In the course of time, of course, she did--the end of her life was very tragic.

In any case, she used to spend weekends with us occasionally, and I admired her very much. She was the kind of scholar the like of which I could never be. But that's all I can say about Elizabeth, except later on she became head of the East Asiatic Library here [UC Berkeley].

But about Salmony, I would go out to visit Professor Salmony's classes. Salmony was an extraordinary fellow, a very ungracious person. Albert Bender had given Oriental things to Mills, to Stanford, and to Cal, and they were all bogus. He didn't know it, bless his dear heart, but he had been taken advantage of by an unscrupulous dealer in San Francisco who had sold him all these things.

Anyway, once when I went out in my little Ford car to audit Professor Salmony's classes, standing beside my car was the almost six-foot figure of Aurelia Reinhardt, the most wonderful president Mills has ever had. Marvelous woman. She was a great friend of my mother and stepfather.

She said, "Kath-er-ine--" all three syllables, and fluttering her eyes, "I have something very important to ask you. You have studied Asian art at Harvard, and I must ask you about Dr. Salmony. You know, he has said that our dear Albert Bender's things are absolutely fake. The Jewish community in

San Francisco would like me to fire Dr. Salmony because of his attacks on Mr. Bender."

I said, "I love Mr. Bender as much as you do, Dr. Reinhardt. He's a dear family friend."

"Is it true," said Dr. Reinhardt, "what Dr. Salmony says about our dear Albert?"

I didn't know what to say. I felt terribly embarrassed, because I loved Albert Bender so much. But I said, "Well, Dr. Reinhardt, as I've said, I admire and love Albert Bender, but it is true what Dr. Salmony says about those works of art."

"Then," she said, with decision, "I will not fire Dr. Salmony." And she lost I don't know how much money for Mills because of the anger of the Jewish community that Salmony had not been fired.

That's all recorded by dear Jim Hart. I told him that story one time. He said, "That's got to be recorded." Later they arranged down at Mills to have a little tribute to Albert Bender. I said, "Jim, I don't want to say that." He said, "Yes, that's important to know." But I was really proud of Mills College, of course, the fact that they would stand up for scholarship in spite of the sadness.

You know, Bender was an intimate friend of my mother and stepfather. I used to chauffeur him places. He would have been my guardian if my parents had died. That is, in the financial sense, I don't mean-- . By that time I was too grown-up to need any personal attention. But he was very much a member of the family, and I was very fond of him.

Later on, I wrote an article about Albert Bender for a national art magazine. It was a very pedestrian article, but anyway, it was an appreciative one. [appended]

Riess: Did they de-accession those works?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, they had to de-accession them, and so did Stanford and Berkeley.

Riess: The Mills connection with the Asian community has gone way, way back. How were those bonds forged?

Caldwell: I wondered about that, too. I have never quite documented this, but I think Mills was the first college west of Chicago that had

courses in Asian art. I was told that Susan and Cyrus Mills lived in--I forget whether it was Burma or whether it was India.

Riess: They were missionaries?

Caldwell: Yes. Anyway, they lived in Asia. I've always assumed that was the reason why Mills College turned in that direction. The fact that they taught anything about Asian art interested me. Somehow or other, they must have been influenced by that earlier--but this was just a guess. I have an article somebody else that was interested in this gave me one time. I'll try to look that up before I see you next time.

Riess: Was there any strength in Asian art at Berkeley?

Caldwell: Oh, my. They didn't have anything about Asian art to speak of. Oh, there was one person, excuse me, but he was not a scholar, and it was more an appreciative thing. [Chiura Obata]

A Series of Job Opportunities

Riess: You have talked about Langdon Warner and how important an influence he was. Had it occurred to you when you first studied this that it was something you would want to specialize in?

Caldwell: Not at all, I had no idea I would get into it. I majored in philosophy as an undergraduate, with no idea of what I was going to do when I finished college. This just fell into my lap, so to speak, but I didn't realize how much it was going to be a part of my life.

Riess: How did it fall into your lap?

Caldwell: The contact with Warner is what I am referring to, the opportunity that came my way unexpectedly. But I never had any expectation of teaching in a college. My master's degree at Harvard was in museum work. I had no thought--that's the reason I have no Ph.D.--I had no thought ever of college teaching.

My first jobs in San Francisco as a recent graduate, the first one was at the Legion of Honor, the second one at the de Young Museum, and the third one at the Museum of what is now called Modern Art, in downtown San Francisco. I had no thought ever of doing college teaching. But at each of those

museums--incidentally, I wasn't bounced out of them, it just so happened that opportunities arose at each one of them--I somehow or other got into educational work, was in charge of the lectures. And that got me interested in teaching.

Riess: Please be specific about what you did in those earlier jobs.

Caldwell: I had charge of the lectures for the members of the museums. The museums would announce in their calendars that there would be lectures on such-and-such a topic at such-and-such an hour in such-and-such a place, and day. Just as it is today; they do the same thing today.

Incidentally, I was shocked when I got my first job at the Legion of Honor, to find that people who seemed to me should know better didn't know anything about contemporary art at all. I mean, contemporary then, Braque, Picasso. I had been over in Europe and in the East, and I couldn't imagine people being artistically so utterly bereft. So my missionary spirit about bringing enlightenment on art to the community started with Western art at the Legion, and then later the Asian art.

Riess: You gave the lectures?

Caldwell: Yes, I was the lecturer. I wasn't just organizing them, I was giving them.

Riess: The lectures were in conjunction with exhibitions?

Caldwell: Oftentimes. Sometimes they were little surveys of modern art.

I must tell that as a part of getting a degree in art history, of course, if you chose Asian art it didn't mean you didn't have training in Western art. At a level of no great depth, but certainly more than the public. And so I gave lectures in Western art at the museums. It wasn't until much later on that I zeroed in on Asia.

There would be lectures on Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, contemporary, and so on. And when I was at the downtown museum, what is now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, I would invite guest artists to come in. There is always this tension between art historians and studio people, and I thought I should give them a chance.

It was very interesting to me to see the difference between the art historian and the studio person was that the studio

person was so absolutely convinced of his own creativity, which had been formed by this or that particular predecessor, that there was no open-mindedness about other styles. That impressed me very much. And I decided that that was part of their own commitment, their commitment to their work; they couldn't do it any other way.

Riess: You had them actually lecture?

Caldwell: Oh yes, I'd invite them to do a lecture. I had a great deal of latitude.

Grace McCann Morley and the San Francisco Museum of Art

Caldwell: By the way, it was under Grace McCann Morley that I developed this interest. She liked the fact that I lectured well, and she was the one that little by little put the whole lecture program in--that is to say, I didn't have to get out the publicity or anything--the whole lecture program in my hands. And that's how I got interested in teaching. It just fell into my lap. I just stumbled on it, really.

When I say I was trained to do museum work, that sounds very vague, but you were supposed to learn how to oversee the hanging of pictures and so on, all the details of museum work. But it so happened that lecturing was my forte, and so that was the way I got into teaching.

Riess: Essentially you had the same training that Grace Morley had.

Caldwell: Yes, really, that's true.

Riess: She was quite supportive of you?

Caldwell: Well, I think that the staff was very small, and the funding was meager. The City of San Francisco paid for heat and lighting and the building, but not for the staff. So of course she was limited in whom she could employ. As I was a novice at this, at teaching, she could get me at a very reasonable rate.

Riess: But you were paid?

Caldwell: Oh yes, it was paid. I don't think I have ever, until I retired, I don't think I have ever worked without compensation. It was a reasonable salary for the period.

Riess: Did you have contact with the Women's Board?

Caldwell: No. That was an interesting thing. I knew Elise Haas, and about the terrible tension that eventually occurred between her and Grace Morley. The reason for Grace Morley's dismissal from San Francisco was because Elise Haas did not appreciate--or approve, I should say--the style of painting that Grace Morley liked. She thought it was too far out.

Mrs. Haas happened to have been a friend of my mother and stepfather's, you see, I had grown up more or less knowing the Haas family, and Mrs. Stern, her mother, and I realized that this terrible warfare, almost, this intellectual and aesthetic warfare between Morley and Elise Haas, was building up which culminated in the dismissal of Grace Morley. Because my family had known the Haas family I had social contacts with them. So that's how I happened to know what was happening. But as a board, no, I didn't have contact with them.

Riess: Did you talk with Grace Morley about that in those last days?

Caldwell: No, not at all.

Riess: Was Grace Morley a person you felt close to?

Caldwell: It depends what you mean by closeness. It was not an easy relationship, I think. I heard later--and to my astonishment because there was nothing in the world that would ever persuade me to take an executive, or an administrative post--that she had some worry that I might want to be director of the museum. I thought that was hilarious. If ever there were anybody that had no interest in administration, it was I. That I just heard through the grapevine.

In any case she had a lot of confidence in me, because later on when the World's Fair of 1939-1940 occurred on Treasure Island she suggested--. A little bit was her influence, not altogether. I can't tell you how naive and non-egotistical I felt about my job. I felt I was performing a rather minor job, with pleasure. But I just heard that there was a little tension on her part about that.

Riess: Did you go back to the San Francisco Museum of Art after the Fair?

Caldwell: No, I didn't. I left the Museum at the time of the Fair, and I lectured at the Fair the whole time--very well paid, by the way, for the time. After that I knew that somehow or other it wouldn't be a good idea to go back to the Museum.

It was at that point, consulting with my husband, that I enrolled at the University of California graduate school, and with no idea of getting a doctorate. Incidentally, I never had any idea of getting a doctorate, because at that time in order to do museum work a master's degree was sufficient. And it was through studying with another great Asian scholar, Otto Maenchen, that the job at Mills College came about.

Riess: Why didn't you feel it was a good idea to go back to the Museum?

Caldwell: Two things. I think perhaps because I felt not so comfortable with my relationship with Dr. Morley. And partly because the scope seemed too limited. I had enjoyed lecturing there, but there came a time when I felt that my audience--. They were nice, well-educated, upper-middle-class women who never read a book, and therefore there was no exchange of ideas, no feedback, and I didn't want to do that kind of lecturing any more.

I had no idea that anything so delightful and rewarding would turn up as the Mills position. When I enrolled at age forty in the graduate school at Berkeley, I had no idea that anything like the Mills job would ever come into my hands. And again, you see, this was because of my contact with yet another Asian art scholar [Otto Maenchen] that this happened.

Riess: At the San Francisco Museum of Art you had the unenviable task of interpreting modern art?

Caldwell: Actually, at that time it was not as difficult to interpret modern art as it is at the moment. I would be incapable at the moment of being able to adequately interpret what's happening now. But I was very much interested in contemporary art. I also gave lectures that went back into the 19th and early 20th century--I adore the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. Actually I was free to lecture on almost anything that would interest the public. It didn't have to focus on modern art just because of that museum being modern in its emphasis.

Riess: You created your own bank of slides?

Caldwell: The museum built up their own, and I helped them do that. I would borrow slides from Berkeley--no, Berkeley, come to think of it, didn't have very many at that time. No, we built up our own collection.

Riess: Do you remember the names of studio artists you had lecture?

Caldwell: I have no idea. People like Ralph Stackpole had long since left San Francisco. These are people whose names--I deliberately

chose people who were coming up, rather than the accomplished ones, to give them a chance.

Riess: Did Grace Morley have a veto?

Caldwell: No. And that's another thing. I have had such good luck in being able to have almost complete freedom in every job I have ever had. She was extremely agreeable to work with on that point. If she gave you an area of the museum to take charge of, that was your job. Though sometimes I did have to stay late at night to help install new exhibitions, but I enjoyed that.

There was one man who was kind of a jack-of-all-trades, with no academic background, but however knew a tremendous lot about contemporary art. I loved working with him, and would get his opinions about [Max] Beckmann, and all sorts of people I might not have been able to "see" perceptively without his vision.

Incidentally, Grace Morley did have trouble working with other professionals--not just me--from the point of view of her worrying about her own position. She need not have worried, because there was never any sense, I think, of competition at all. It would never enter my head, certainly.

She had trouble with Elise and the Women's Board, and that might be understandable, because they were two very strong women. But the person whose name I can't think of who was sort of an assistant director, an awfully nice person, again had no sense of competition with Grace Morley, but Grace was always sort of nervous about this.

I must give my positive opinion of Grace Morley: I think she did more for art history in San Francisco than anybody previously. She came to San Francisco where people, as I said, didn't know who Braque and Picasso were--I mean the average educated person--and she turned it all around. She really and truly put on exhibitions of a quality such as San Franciscans had never seen before. And I think that a great debt is owed to her.

I think it's a shameful thing that at that museum that she just built up to be a great force in the city for contemporary art particularly, that there is no memorial to her, there is no room dedicated to her. There's nothing. And she really turned San Francisco around when it came to appreciation of contemporary art.

Riess: Yet it was the contemporary art that Elise Haas opposed?

Caldwell: Well, remember that was over a long period of time. They had worked together quite well for a while. I wish I could remember what exhibition it was that was the bone of contention, but it was one that Elise Haas particularly objected to from the point of aesthetics.

Riess: Would Grace Morley have been a role model for you?

Caldwell: Well, not exactly, because I never had any desire to be an administrator of a museum.

Riess: But a model of a strong woman in an academic field?

Caldwell: Well, yes. Also, I was very grateful to her because she gave me so much freedom to conduct what I was doing for the Museum in my own way.

Riess: Did you have a social life among the artists in San Francisco during the period when you were organizing the lectures at the San Francisco Museum of Art?

Caldwell: Not really. That's another thing. Remember, I was working there, but my life was in Berkeley, and my social contacts were with the University of California. So that in a sense I was almost like a secretary going to a job and then going home. It's not that my job was similar, but from the point of view of an organization of one's life. After all, I was a housewife, mother, and I didn't have time to stay over in San Francisco and socialize. I had to go home and take care of my job at home.

Art History Graduate Studies, UC Berkeley, Faculty

Riess: You were rare, weren't you, enrolling in the graduate program when you were forty?

Caldwell: Oh yes, I can't tell you what a peculiar bird I was from the point of view of the other young graduate students. And of course I wasn't working for the doctoral program. By the way, when I saw the kind of life that those young people lived that were working for the doctor's oral I thought that was a horror I would never want to experience anyhow.

Riess: But you were taking it all seriously.

Caldwell: Oh heavens, yes, I was enrolled, and wrote thesis papers. I was not an auditor by any means. Otherwise I wouldn't have been

able to demonstrate to Otto Maenchen my competence. And he could not have recommended me to the job if I had been an auditor.

Riess: You were in school in 1946, a time when the student body included a lot of returning GIs, an older population?

Caldwell: Well, I was very much the eldest of any other students I saw there.

And there was another thing: there was a great prejudice against having older women--middle-aged equaled "old" at that time--admitted to the graduate school because they didn't think they'd ever get a job. And they would be taking the place of some younger person for whom there was a brighter future ahead.

But I didn't have any trouble getting in, somehow. And that had nothing to do with my husband being a professor there. I just got my transcript from Harvard, and there was never any question. Maybe it was because the art history department was smaller, and there wasn't as much competition as there might have been, say, in English literature, or engineering, or something like that.

Riess: Besides Otto Maenchen, who were your major professors?

Caldwell: There wasn't anybody else in Asian art. Of course I had to take Western art too, and write theses for my courses there.

Walter Horn was a very important influence from the point of view of thoroughness in doing one's research. I'll never forget his bawling out a student in seminar because he gave a reference to the Encyclopedia Britannica. The idea of anybody in a thesis using the Encyclopedia Britannica as a source was so horrendous that you would have thought he was going to pick that guy up and whack him. It was a very tense moment.

Walter Horn went over [to Europe] after the Second World War, you know, to identify works of art that had been taken from one country to another. When he came back he would talk about all these adventures he had, at dinner parties.

Riess: Amorous?

Caldwell: Yes. And of course his first wife left him for that reason. Anyway, he was a wonderful teacher. I don't want to gossip about his life of the heart. He was a remarkable teacher.

Riess: To get this straight, you were just going for another master's degree at Berkeley?

Caldwell: Well, I had gotten my master's at Harvard, in museum work. I took the first course in the United States at Harvard in museum work. And that's why I did not go in for the Ph.D. program. I didn't need to, and furthermore, I really don't think I could have handled it. Women today seem to do this with the greatest of ease. I was not capable of handling a marriage and a Ph.D. program, not smart enough to do that, not efficient enough.

Riess: But your husband was supportive?

Caldwell: I think he might not have been very happy about my being in a Ph.D. program. I don't want to suggest for a moment that he ever lifted a voice against anything I wanted to do, but you know what the limits are of your relationship, I think.

However, I honestly don't think I would be capable of handling a domestic life and a professional life in the sense of the Ph.D. program. Those young people whom I saw when I was studying at Berkeley, they wouldn't even go to a movie, they were so intent, they wouldn't do anything but bone up for that Ph.D. oral. Even if I had been capable of handling it, I couldn't have done that to my marriage.

Riess: Your program was two years?

Caldwell: Yes, and then the job at Mills was available, so that's how I stopped doing that.

Otto Maenchen, and Anna Maenchen

Riess: Tell me more about Otto Maenchen. Or perhaps, first, tell me about his wife.

Caldwell: Anna Maenchen. Formidable woman. He used to say, "I make the pocket money, my wife, she makes the large sums."

I knew them first socially. I can never forget how astonished I was when I met them. There weren't people here at all that knew anything about Asian art. I met him at a cocktail party, and I couldn't believe it when he referred to a very distinguished Swedish art historian, that anybody else knew who

he was but me. [laughs] And that's how we started. It was a marvelous experience to meet somebody with the same interests.

Riess: This was before you were in the master's program.

Caldwell: Oh yes, yes, I met him a long time before I was in his class, long before I was a student.

Riess: And how did you know Anna?

Caldwell: I knew her more because later on I consulted her about my mother, and I had an enormous admiration for her professionally. But I think she was one of the most self-centered, hopelessly-egotistical people I have ever known in my life. She could never talk about anything but herself and her grandchildren and her life. She couldn't sit still; she would pace the floor. Even socially.

Riess: Even after she stopped practicing.

Caldwell: Oh, she never gave up practice until she died.

But I had a great admiration for her professional expertise. She could zero in. She didn't take my mother on as a patient, but she sent her to a psychiatrist, somebody with a medical background, which she did not have. She gave me a referral, and I went to that person to consult about my mother. Then my mother was a patient of hers for a short time. She was able to diagnose my mother very quickly, the psychiatrist that Anna had referred me to for her.

More on Treasure Island, Arts of the Pacific

Caldwell: I cannot understand how Rudolph Schaeffer, who had such an extraordinary eye, and particularly for ceramics, doesn't even mention but once--this is quoting from him--"There was an exhibition at Treasure Island."² No mention is made by Mr. Schaeffer of the Asian Art Museum at Treasure Island where the greatest works of art in ceramics that ever came to the United States from England were on exhibit.

²Referring to Rudolph Schaeffer, The Rudolph Schaeffer School of Design: Art in San Francisco Since 1915, 1992. The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Not a word does Schaeffer say about the great collection of Asian Art that Langdon Warner put on at the '39-'40 fair. I couldn't understand how that could be. From the point of view of his sensitivity, how could he not have gone into ecstasies over this great, great collection?

Riess: Did people go into ecstasies over it?

Caldwell: No, and if you'd like to talk about that, if this is an appropriate time?

Riess: This is an appropriate time.

Caldwell: All right. This was the thing. In the first place, the exhibition emphasized, of course, contemporary art a great deal. So much of the literature that's now being written in retrospect about the '39-'40 fair has to do with the layout of the gardens, and the creativity that went into the individual buildings which represented the different countries. Perfectly appropriate, because that's what they had done.

But the Palace of Fine Arts had the highest attendance of any concession, if you could call it that, at Treasure Island, more even than at the Gayway, which was the term they used for the amusement zone then. As you entered the arts building, if you went to the right you went to the Western section, and if you went to the left, the whole wing was Asian. But almost nobody went left because they didn't know anything about Asian art.

One of the most tragic, heartbreaking experiences for Langdon Warner was that some miserable columnist in San Francisco wrote an article saying, "Nobody wants to go to the left when they enter the Palace of Fine Arts to look at the Asian art. Who wants to do that?" And that was a brutal blow to Warner, that the attendance to his exhibition was so sparse.

Riess: Did you make an effort to get other coverage of the show?

Caldwell: Suzanne, I am not a person that goes in for controversy very much. I cannot tell you my regrets of the things I did not do. I wish I had gotten in touch with some newspaper person, or even written something myself. I didn't do it. I don't seem to have the impetus to do that kind of thing.

Art on the Gayway

Caldwell: About the Gayway, there was one very funny incident. They had a nude who reclined like Manet's nude, the Olympia. We heard about this at the museum. A few of us went over on our lunch hour to get acquainted with this woman. Utterly ignorant. Just as ignorant as a prostitute. I don't mean that she necessarily was, but there she was, exposing her body for people to pay to see.

And of course, she had never heard of Manet's painting. We got acquainted with her, and we invited her to lunch one day and brought her over to the museum and showed her a picture of the Manet. It was so rare--I was so enormously busy with my job, I so rarely had a chance to circulate in any other parts of the fair, but I thought that was a very worthwhile contact.

Riess: Tell me, while we're talking about the fair, about the Art in Action section.

Caldwell: Well, the Art in Action section was something that I wasn't as observant about, except for [Diego] Rivera who was making this huge mural. He was up on a scaffolding with this big bottom hanging over the edge of it. There was a danger--because of the connection with Trotsky--he might have been shot, and we always used to be so worried about his sitting up on this exposed place, way up high, painting.

Riess: Was Art in Action a popular part of the fair?

Caldwell: Oh, it was very popular. They had things ongoing, showing the creation of pots, and of course Diego Rivera. Dorothy Liebes--I can't remember whether they showed weaving or not, but they had lots of examples in her part of it of different kinds of techniques of weaving. She was introducing a great deal of metal at that time into her art.

Riess: You have a letter about that?

Caldwell: Well, this [letter] has to do with Langdon Warner, after his death. It doesn't have a date on here, a year date. "Just a line, Kay, that I've thought about your memorial"--meaning to Warner--"but have been unable to locate any files which have any bearing on the story more than what you have. But I have thought of a perfectly marvelous memorial. Why don't you work for a grove of the redwoods?"

And then she added, "As you know, the Langdon Warner grove would be a lovely memorial. The only other redwoods known are those in China. Walter and Elise Haas were here last night for dinner, and Walter's one of the leading people in Save-the-Redwoods movement. I believe you'd get much support for the idea. What do you think? --Dorothy."

Friends of Far Eastern Art, and Other Early Interest in Asian Art

- Riess: There were two organizations about Asian art in the thirties. One was formed by Alfred Salmony, and it was called Friends of Far Eastern Art. Tell me what that was.
- Caldwell: Well, he was teaching at that time at Mills College, so in a sense it was based at Mills College. Unfortunately the data I have, the file on that organization, does not list the people who belonged to it. But that is the organization which Schaeffer is referring to when he says that Ching Wah Lee was part of the Asian Art Society, as he refers to it [in the oral history], it's not the one that had to do with the Brundage collection. This [Friends of Far Eastern Art] precedes this by a good many years.
- Riess: Rudolph Schaeffer was involved in something called the East-West Arts Foundation, and he calls that the nucleus of the Asian Art Society.
- Caldwell: I don't know about that in any particular--I just know that it existed, but I had nothing to do with it.
- Riess: Were there two groups, the Salmony group, and the Schaeffer group?
- Caldwell: No, Schaeffer was apparently involved in the Salmony group, and so was Ching Wah Lee. When Schaeffer talks about the nucleus of the [René-Yvon] d'Argencé Asian Art Society, well there was no d'Argencé Asian Art Society, d'Argencé was a curator.
- Mr. Schaeffer eventually, of course, was very much interested in the acquisition of the Brundage collection, but not initially a part of the organization that was promoting its acquisition. He was a Johnny-come-lately on art from the point of view of the Society for Asian Art.
- Riess: Can you say anything more about the Friends of Far Eastern Art?

Caldwell: I had very little to do with that myself, so I can't really. The idea was to promote acquisition by private citizens, that was its point, to try to get people to collect excellent examples of Asian art. Because of the deception that had been practiced by dealers on potential buyers, people were discouraged in buying, particularly Chinese art, because there was too much disagreement about authenticity.

At that time the unwary, unsophisticated collector would take the word of the dealer. Nowadays, nobody would dream of buying something without taking it to a museum curator, or some very, very highly qualified appraiser. I mean, there are excellent appraisers who are quite reliable, but in those days people just thought anybody selling Asian art must know it, and that wasn't true.

Riess: Were dealers on Grant Avenue reliable?

Caldwell: I don't know about--no, I don't think it was a matter of the ones on Grant Avenue being deliberately deceptive. I can't remember the name of the man that was a particular villain in this, the dealer, but he was a Westerner, he was not a Chinese.

I'm not blaming the Chinese Chinatown people in their little shops. They didn't know, because they hadn't been educated, they had no academic background at all, and they had no intention to deceive. The dealer I'm referring to, whose name I do not remember, was definitely out to make sales and to make claims of authenticity which were not valid.

Salmony came here and found there were people who had collected works of art which were of no historical importance. He founded the society with the idea of educating people, leading them into the straight and narrow path of authenticity.

Riess: Too bad we can't think of some of the names of the people who might have been members.

Caldwell: I've tried very hard in going back in the files at Mills to find data on this, and unfortunately I have not so far been able to dig anything up. I'm not quite sure why I was not very much involved in that organization. I was interested. Maybe it was because Salmony himself was an abrasive personality. But in any case, I was not on the board of that. I must have belonged to it, and I greatly approved of Salmony's trying to purify, from the point of view of authenticity, the standards of collection.

It is important to straighten out the misstatements of Mr. Schaeffer, such a dear person. I knew him off and on, admired

him as an artist extravagantly, and was amazed as I always am at the innate taste that some people have without any academic training at all. His academic training was in practice of art, but not of the history of it, and yet without any knowledge of the history of Chinese art he could recognize a great work. And his own collection was unbelievably authentic and aesthetically satisfying.

Riess: Did you see his collection in exhibitions?

Caldwell: Well, no, I used to go over and visit him. I didn't know him well, but nobody could fail to fall for his charm. He was friendly to everyone, and particularly gratified when people shared his enthusiasms. I never had any deep friendship with him, just an admiration from afar and occasionally going over to see him.

Riess: Did his little gallery have some exhibitions? He had something called the East West Gallery, I believe.

Caldwell: He had things on exhibition. I knew him when he was on Potrero Hill [after 1955]. Earlier on he had a studio near Chinatown [St. Anne Street], but I didn't know him at that time. For the historical record, it's important to make this distinction.

Riess: Ching Wah Lee's collection was sold at Sotheby's for more than a million dollars.

Caldwell: He had very fine things.

Riess: Where was his collection?

Caldwell: He had a shop in San Francisco. He was a dealer, and he had a shop in San Francisco.

Riess: He was one of the scrupulous dealers?

Caldwell: Yes.

More on Graduate Studies

Riess: In Stephen Pepper's oral history he talked about organizing the Ph.D. program in art history, which was first offered in 1948. The faculty for the program was Walter Horn, Oliver Washburn, Daryll Amyx, Otto Maenchen, and Eugen Neuhaus. Langdon Warner, whom Pepper knew and consulted, warned Pepper against Maenchen,

saying Maenchen was in the German school, and pedantic, and did not have a humane approach to art history. He said that he was a genuine scholar, but did not have a great breadth of appreciation.³

Caldwell: I'd agree with that about Maenchen. He was a meticulous, precise scholar. He was very skeptical of "appreciation." He was all for very carefully-phrased scholastic comments. He didn't want to emphasize aesthetics, because he thought that was imprecise. That didn't mean that he didn't enjoy looking at works of art, and he had some very beautiful ones of his own, but he did not want the word "beautiful" or words of pure appreciation used, because he didn't think they were precise enough. He was there to talk to you about the nitty-gritty of the history. And he was very severe in his classes. For some reason or other he did not want questions asked.

Riess: Was it something about language difficulty?

Caldwell: Oh, he spoke English fluently. He had a strong accent.

Riess: He had come from Vienna before the war?

Caldwell: I don't know.

Riess: Was he Jewish?

Caldwell: Was it he, or was it his wife? Or maybe both of them.

Aurelia Reinhardt, the president of Mills, in a brilliant stroke had brought Maenchen, Salmony [1934], Alfred Neumeyer [1935], and Darius Milhaud, all to Mills College as refugees from the prejudice against Jews in Germany. Neumeyer never left Mills, whereas Salmony went on to a more prestigious institution, New York University.

Riess: Pepper also said of Langdon Warner that he was more superficial and sentimental.

Caldwell: Langdon Warner always was on the defensive for himself, always being self-deprecatory, because he did not have the academic background that other scholars had. In the course of time he has been faulted for inaccuracy. Yes, maybe he might have been sentimental in his relations with the Japanese colleagues that he had.

³Stephen C. Pepper oral history, pp. 231-233.

One of the reasons, of course, for the sentimentality towards him on the part of the Japanese was because of their belief that he saved Kyoto and Nara from being bombed. Warner was the last person in the world to toot his own horn, he was self-deprecatory, and he claimed this wasn't true at all. But the Japanese fervently believed that he had preserved their great artistic treasures, and they have a memorial to him at the Horiuji Monastery in Nara.

I had the most extraordinary experience because I was a friend and student of Langdon Warner's in going to Horiuji Monastery. It's one of the oldest and most prestigious of all the early monasteries in Japan. It was a snowy day, and I went with a man named Wu who was a curator of Oriental art at Princeton, very tall and very haughty, and he said, "Don't be foolish. You'll never get into anything this day."

There was a particular building I had wanted very much to see, which was kept locked and only opened to the public once a year. We had tea, as we always did, with the monks, and I mentioned that I was a friend of Langdon Warner's and had studied with him, and asked if it would be possible to see this particular place. They said--this was in the morning--they said, "Come back after lunch." So we walked around, and I was kidded by these scholars I was with at the very thought that they would do a thing like this. "No, once a year only."

We came back, and after more tea they said, "In honor of the friend of Langdon Warner's we will open this temple." We trudged through the snow to this building. In there was a beautiful statue, almost human-sized, one of the most beautiful in Japan, called the Yunedono, and that's what I wanted to see. And they opened it.

Because it was a religious building they then started this wonderful chanting. The snow was coming down, and the chanting was floating out on the snow, and we all bowed, of course, in deference to their religion. Then all of a sudden, the ceremony being over, they said, "Just go right up, go right in, and enjoy yourself." A great experience. And all because of my friendship with Langdon Warner. And oh, did I have the laugh on my scornful friends from Princeton.

Riess: Pepper says of Langdon Warner that he might have come to teach at Berkeley, but that he was too old to be thought of.

Caldwell: Langdon Warner didn't have the kind of strict academic discipline that the Ph.D. implies. However, Langdon's great contribution to the history of Asian art in America was his

appreciation, perception, and knowledge of Japanese art, which had not been appreciated here at all.

He brought to the attention of scholarship and to students in his classes knowledge of works of art that they never would have known about. There had been a great deal of scholarship in Chinese art, but not Japanese, and he directed the attention of the scholarly world to the greatness of Japanese art. He, so to speak, for America discovered Japanese art. He did do some very good work on this.

As time went on and the more searching, careful archaeological techniques were developed, he was not a part of that kind of discipline and knowledge. So he has been, shall we say, patronized in references to him by other scholars. On the other hand, I think anyone who knows the field would realize how much he did in introducing the field of Japanese art history to America.

Riess: And he didn't read Japanese?

Caldwell: No, in those days none of them did. Sherman Lee didn't. Alfred Salmony, the great German scholar who came over here as a Jewish refugee and was at Mills College for a while, none of that generation went in for studying Japanese, or Chinese, as the case may be.

When I was a student at Harvard you were not allowed to study either Japanese or Chinese unless you were to make it the focus of your studies. You could not combine Chinese or Japanese, let's say, with history or sociology or art history, because they said the Chinese or Japanese languages were so difficult that you could not possibly use your time or energy on anything else.

They said that because of the difficulty of these languages that you should collaborate. You should get somebody who is a specialist in Chinese or Japanese to translate what it is you need. When I was there, you see, in 1929, that position was held, and that's the reason I myself do not know Chinese or Japanese.

I am very anxious to point out that Langdon was not an exception in this; none of the scholars at that time knew Chinese or Japanese--of his day. It was not until the Second World War when they had to have, particularly in Japanese, trained people who could deal with the Japanese language, and they had these crash courses, day and night, month in, month out. A dedication of unbelievable difficulty.

Those years of graduate school were a very happy couple of years for me. I simply loved studying, and the smell of the library stacks. Then all of a sudden somebody at Mills who was teaching Asian art, a young man, he had a nervous breakdown, or some crisis occurred, and the dean of the faculty at Mills called Maenchen and asked whom he would recommend to take the job, and he recommended me. And that's how I got the job. No Ph.D. Of course, that would be out of the question now.

Riess: Did you do any work at Berkeley in Asian history? Ferdinand Lessing, Peter Boodberg, Edward Schafer?

Caldwell: I would audit classes sometimes, on my own. Yes, indeed. Peter Boodberg particularly. He was highly specialized in the language; he could lecture for two weeks out of the month maybe on one Chinese character. And such a character himself! What a wonderful man! He was a great experience to know.

Edward Schafer was a brilliant scholar and wrote eloquently. He was one of the worst lecturers, ever, in the University. I used to try to audit his courses, but I found him so impossibly dull and non-communicative that I gave up on him. But I bought all of his books and was a great admirer of him.

And when I got even more interested in Japanese art I did a great deal of study of history and sociology and so on. I went in greater depth into Japanese art than I did in Chinese.

Riess: Were there Chinese or Japanese students in the art history graduate program?

Caldwell: I don't remember any particularly then.

Riess: Did you read in Oriental religion and philosophy?

Caldwell: Oh yes, a great deal, but this I was interested in on my own, not necessarily through courses.

Riess: Do you feel that you understand the Eastern mind?

Caldwell: [laughs] Oh, does anyone?

Riess: It seems important in being a student of their art.

Caldwell: I don't think one ever can understand the Japanese mind. They are so ingrown, so limited in their judgments to their own culture. They can't understand other manners or customs than their own. They really and truly have a phobia against foreigners, they really have, for all their politeness. To

understand the Japanese psychology and sociology is very, very difficult.

And I should say I spent quite a long time on the Japanese language, I studied Japanese for quite a while. After Jim Caldwell died I immersed myself in this. So I have some knowledge of the relationship of the language to the social customs. The many layers and subtleties of language. For example, the male language and the female language, which is not only in respect to nouns, but actually verb structures. I did go in some depth into Japanese psychology in respect to language. I did an enormous amount of studying on my own.

Job at Mills College, 1951

Riess: After Otto Maenchen recommended you to teach at Mills, then what? Who interviewed you?

Caldwell: Nobody interviewed me. It's really very odd. The dean of the faculty, at least at that time, seemed to have complete authority to hire faculty members, and she had consulted Dr. Maenchen.

Riess: Who was that? That wasn't Mary Woods Bennett, was it?

Caldwell: No, it wasn't Mary Woods Bennett, with whom I became very good friends later. I can't remember the name of the person who preceded her.

Riess: Lynn White was president then?

Caldwell: He didn't interview me either. I knew him socially, and I was very much drawn to him because he was a scholar--in archaeology really. I used to love to go and see him and talk to him, because he was interested in Chinese art.

But then Alfred Neumeyer very courteously welcomed me, and introduced me the first day to my class. He seemed to be very pleased to have somebody else there teaching art history, even though we were in such opposite fields.

Riess: He was the department, essentially?

Caldwell: He was the only other art historian at the time. Yes, he taught the whole of Western art, you see. There were other people in the faculty in the studio arts, sculpture and painting, and in

ceramics--Mills College has always been distinguished in ceramics.

Riess: And that was its strength, the practice side.

Caldwell: Yes. [Antonio] Prieto was there at that time, who died all too young. He was very distinguished in his field.

Riess: An article about when you were teaching at Mills said that you were "the only contact with Asian culture for several generations of art majors, and other assorted students inclined towards exotica." That was the feeling, that it was the "exotic East" still?

Caldwell: Well, that was the attitude of the public at that time. Even now they refer to Asian music in--I can't think of the word--but for example, down at the University of Southern California they specialize in Asian music, and in African too, I think, and they refer to it not as exotica, but some word that makes it sound as if it were not part of the mainstream. Which of course it isn't, according to our culture.

I studied a great deal about Asian philosophy. I've studied Buddhism and Shintoism.

Riess: On your own, you're saying?

Caldwell: Oh, yes.

Lynn White's Presidency of Mills

Riess: One of the bits of history of Mills that I read was that Lynn White wanted to focus on Korean art at Mills, since he felt that Japanese and Chinese were covered by the sister universities.

Caldwell: That's news to me. I never heard him refer to it. He was interested in technology, and at the time I knew Lynn best he was trying to discover the invention of the stirrup. [laughter] He was not interested in art history, he was interested in technology. And the Chinese, of course, are known for their extraordinary expertise in science--up to a certain point. There is a huge volume written on the scientific achievements of the Chinese by a great English scholar named [Joseph] Needham called Science and Civilization in China.

Anyway, when I was going off to England with Jim on sabbatical, Lynn said to me, "Now, Kay, when you're in British museums, if you see anything that looks like a stirrup, let me know."

I didn't know anything about Near Eastern stuff, but one day I saw a little clay impression, not of a stirrup but of a little platform underneath the foot. It didn't have the curve over it. So I had a huge photograph blown up and sent it to Lynn. He published it in a book, and his acknowledgement was not "Katherine Caldwell," but "Mrs. James Caldwell." And I never forgave him for that. I loved my husband dearly, and socially I was Mrs. James Caldwell, but when it came to scholarship, I expected to be called by my own name.

Riess: Do you think that was unconscious?

Caldwell: No. I think that Lynn never really thought of women as intellectual equals. It was known that when we had social events at Mills he always gravitated toward the men faculty members. And then he wrote that book called Educating Our Daughters, and the point of the book was that since women's role in life was domestic, they should make an art of it. They should learn how to weave the material for their curtains, and do gourmet cooking, for example.

I think that's the reason, among others, that he was asked to leave Mills College, though he was an excellent scholar. He went to UCLA after he left Mills, on their faculty.

Riess: That was not tongue-in-cheek, all of that?

Caldwell: No. Later on, at Wheeler Hall in Berkeley, Lynn was asked to come to comment on his book. Jim and I went--Jim and I both liked Lynn personally very, very much. When the question period came, there was an awkward silence because nobody asked any questions. And Jim Caldwell said, "Now, Lynn, you know, the point of your book is to send women back to the kitchen." [laughter] That was pretty much the sentiment of his book.

Riess: I wonder if, at that time at Mills, there was a lot of sympathy for that attitude.

Caldwell: Well, they had a number of practical courses. They had a course in weaving, and I think that's a good thing to have in an art department. The Japanese attitude towards art is not to make a distinction between the arts and the crafts.

Riess: I think that the education of women was not at its high point in the fifties. It was not the most enlightened time.

Caldwell: Oh, no. It was not. The assumption was not made that a woman would have a career on her own, as it is today. It's the exception nowadays for a young woman not to have her own field of expertise or interest.

Riess: Easton Rothwell was president of Mills from 1959 to 1967.

Caldwell: Oh, yes. I was very fond--everybody was fond of Easton. He's a lovable, charming man. He was another person who always gave the impression that the person he was talking to was the most interesting person in his life at the moment. Everybody had that feeling about Easton. And his wife, Ginny, with whom I keep up a friendship to this day, is a caring person too.

Riess: Did he [Rothwell] have any particular interest in Asian studies?

Caldwell: I never thought he had a special interest in Asian studies. Nothing in relation to my work at all. Just he was everybody's friend, really. I had much more in common with Lynn White on the professional side than I had with any other president of Mills. I was under three presidents there.

Course Work in Art History

Riess: You started out teaching art history, rather than Asian art history.

Caldwell: No, my field was always in Asian art history, chiefly China and Japan. I had two courses. I was a part-time worker, employee, whatever, called a lecturer then. It was only later that I was given the dignity of the name of a professor.

I had two courses, One was a survey course, which did include India up to a certain point. That was imitating Harvard, because at Harvard they had a course--actually, it included the Middle East as well as the continent of India. I didn't know Indian art in any depth. I knew more than my students did, of course, but it was not my main interest. I felt because my training at Harvard did include India, and since Buddhism arose there, that Indian art should be included. But that was a limited area.

My emphasis was on China and Japan. And each year I gave, in addition to the survey course, one year on Chinese art and the next year on Japanese art.

Riess: And did you have to talk them into offering those classes?

Caldwell: Oh, no. That's one thing. I think that's--I don't know how it is at Berkeley now, but in my husband's day at Berkeley the professor had enormous autonomy over his own classes. And similarly I had absolute freedom to do anything I wanted. It was very much a responsibility, and I tried very hard to keep up with current research.

I would often audit classes at UC Berkeley. At that time the teaching of Asian art at Berkeley was limited. Really, Maenchen was the first expert they had. But my point is that they didn't break down the history of Asian art in terms of an expert in India, an expert in China, an expert in Japan. It was a survey course. This, of course, is still true at Mills; they haven't the money to have an expert in each of the civilizations.

Riess: But when you were there, you did break it down into Japanese and Chinese.

Caldwell: Well, yes, but my point is that nowadays the idea would be to have one specialist just in India, one specialist just in Japan, another one just in China. Asian art was not routinely taught in very many institutions then.

Mills--I really intend to document this--I think Mills was the first college west of Chicago to have courses in Asian art. I'm fairly sure that's true. You see, the Millses, who actually founded Mills, were interested in Asia. They had been missionaries, in Burma, I believe.

The Students

Caldwell: In any case, I enjoyed the classes very, very much, and one of the things I want to say is that the students were excellent. The students really came to Mills to study. I don't mean there weren't exceptions, but for the most part they were very responsible, and they followed up on what they were asked to do. And of course, the classes were small and one could have a personal relationship with one's students.

Riess: You had Asian students at Mills.

Caldwell: Well, yes, from Japan mostly. I had one student whose father was a Japanese representative in the United Nations. Very interesting. And then there was another girl from Thailand who was an ardent Buddhist. Mills provided rice for her meals three times a day, and she was such an ardent Buddhist, I remember once when she was home with a cold, telling the class to be sure to be very, very respectful when we talked about Buddhism. Not that they were ever disrespectful, but a little extra solemn maybe. [laughs]

Riess: Did you find yourself feeling kind of warmly parental towards these girls?

Caldwell: I don't believe in the parental attitude. I think just the opposite. I called them by their last names in class, which probably isn't done now, because I felt they were no longer high school students, and I felt they should be treated as adults. Even if they didn't always act that way.

Riess: It would be hard not to be aware that you were in an all-woman atmosphere.

Caldwell: In terms of the future, I thought of them as individuals--perhaps because of my mother's role model as a person with a life of her own--I thought of them as going out into the world, maybe in many directions.

Riess: And you were kind of a role model for them, perhaps.

Caldwell: Yes. And remember, I had grown up in Berkeley in coeducation, I had gone to the University of Wisconsin, a coeducational institution. And when I was at Harvard, my classes in those days were almost all in the Harvard Yard and not segregated. I had a couple of segregated classes, notably with Mr. Whitehead, but for the most part, I worked in classes that were coeducational at Harvard.

So this was a new experience for me, to teach at a college that was all female. And I treated them more as if it were a coeducational one, I think. I never thought of them just as--they were obviously women, but I thought of them as individuals.

Speaking of Asian students, I had one very beautiful Indian girl from a very highly educated background. She spoke British English, and she had been brought up in a Catholic atmosphere. She told me about how much the nuns had wanted the students to

be acquainted with the New Testament, and how they had to memorize long passages of it. The nun would, when they were in a circle, point to one girl and have her start out, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God," and then the next one carried on, and so on. So you had to be alert, and so familiar with the passage you could pick it up.

After she'd said this, I said, "In that case, you must have been converted to Christianity." And a look of perfect horror came over her. "Oh, Mrs. Caldwell, no!" And she got up--this was in my office--out of her chair, and she knelt down, and pressed her hands together, and said, "I worship Lord Krishna." I'll never forget. This beautiful girl. [laughs]

Academic Life and Resources at Mills

Riess: How did your classes fit into Mills' general program in the humanities?

Caldwell: Well, it was an elective course, except for people majoring in art history. So when you say fit in, it was never a requirement, and in a way I liked that idea. I liked the fact that the course was taken out of voluntary choice.

Riess: Was there anything offered in the music department in Asian music?

Caldwell: No. There was one very fine scholar in Chinese history, and he used to bring his classes over every so often to my class, so we collaborated.

Riess: And the scholarly atmosphere at Mills? Were you so much a commuter from Berkeley and part-time that you never got involved?

Caldwell: You mean in terms of my relationship to the faculty? Because my social life was in Berkeley, and I had my domestic responsibilities, I didn't spend much time on the campus outside of my teaching. I became acquainted with people in the art department, of course, all of my colleagues, and in dance. Eleanor Lauer, who was head of the dance department, and I were very great friends. And there were other individuals here and there. But on the whole I wasn't really integrated, let's say, into the faculty life of the campus.

Riess: Did it have a strong faculty life?

Caldwell: Well, they did. It was very amusing, because until they built the Rothwell Center, which was partly for students and partly for faculty, a beautiful building, the male faculty members were very, very exclusive. They had what they called Kiva--you know, a kiva is an American Indian male retreat. They had a little building there, an awful little shabby building, that no woman could enter.

And the story went that Aurelia Reinhardt--this was before my time--that she was making a survey, and that she came and knocked on the door and expected to go in, and was refused entrance. The attitude was very--this faculty was very socially segregated when I first went there, and it all changed after they built that Rothwell Center.

Riess: You mean sexually segregated.

Caldwell: Yes. And then the Kiva sort of dried up. So that later on--the relationship now, and it has been I think for many years, very, very easy and very, very accepting of men and women socially. I don't think there's conceivably any division of the sexes on the faculty any more.

Riess: You said that you knew Mary Woods Bennett quite well when she came in 1953?

Caldwell: Yes. I greatly admired her. She was very sympathetic toward my courses, I think. I mean, I got that impression. Maybe everybody did. I was always impressed with what I thought was her fabulous memory, and I mentioned that to her, and she said, "I just write everything down."

I did not participate in the Mills faculty committees. I was not obliged to as a lecturer. So I didn't have that interchange with other members of the faculty, except as I made friends on a purely social basis.

I think that I was impressed with the freedom that one had in teaching, and in ordering one's courses. I was impressed with the extraordinary seriousness of the students.

Riess: Do they have a good library for those purposes?

Caldwell: Well, Dr. Salmony, who had preceded me by quite a little while at Mills, had an extraordinary ability to raise funds, and there was a marvelous library up to that point. Much of it was in the little study, the little office that I had. So there really was, up to that point, a very good library with emphasis on Chinese art.

Of course, it was realized that these students were undergraduates, were being taught at the undergraduate level. That's another thing; I was very, very glad that the master's degree in art history was cancelled. Neumeyer was sympathetic with this idea, because in order to present graduate work adequately, you needed to have specialists in many different fields, and at Mills there were only the two of us in art history.

Riess: You mean there had been--?

Caldwell: They had given a master's degree in art history, prior to the time I came there. And actually, the first few years, I think, when I was there. I was so glad when they cancelled that. Knowing by this time what they were doing under Walter Horn, and Maenchen, too, at Cal, and others, it seemed to me not really responsible for the institution [Mills] to give master's degrees in art history.

Riess: Did teachings in Asian art history expand in those twenty years that you were there?

Caldwell: No, and to this day, it's--because only one person covers the whole field of Asian art, it couldn't expand. It could only expand by having specialists in each civilization, as Cal eventually did.

Gallery Exhibitions at Mills

Riess: What was your role in exhibitions in the Mills gallery?

Caldwell: Oh, I put on a couple of exhibitions while I was there. One was Ed Grabhorn's very fine collection of early Japanese prints, and another one was a collection of Chinese ceramics that was owned by a professor at Berkeley and his wife. I put that on in the art gallery there.

That was something I forgot to say: people teaching art history were expected to put on gallery exhibits from time to time, and that was the best one I put on, yes.

Riess: Did you send your students to museums in the area?

Caldwell: Oh, I took them to museums, yes, and I gave them little projects. It wasn't--well, it was in '58 that we got the Brundage collection, but it wasn't installed for a while. I was

at Mills from '51 to '71, and eventually, in the course of a very long time, they installed the Brundage collection.

Riess: But prior to that were there pieces that you could study?

Caldwell: Oh, yes. But what I did--that's a good point, I forgot, and rather an important one. There was a little exhibition case--just one, on the second floor of the art building--which was all locked up and had a little glass window. I would borrow from people in San Francisco very, very rare works of art. So I always had something original for them to look at.

Riess: How did you manage that?

Caldwell: I knew people in San Francisco who had rare objects, and I had portal-to-portal insurance--I wouldn't have dreamed of taking them in my car without that insurance. And I kept that going. It's very frustrating to teach art history with those little lantern slides. Something that might be three inches in height, say a little sculpture with high quality of craftsmanship, blown up on the screen might look like an enormous sculpture, and vice versa.

Having original works of art is the only answer to giving an adequate idea of what works of art are like. I'm glad you mentioned that, because that's not been carried on since, the constant exhibition of fine examples.

Riess: You changed it how often?

Caldwell: Oh, maybe a couple of months, maybe six--I couldn't take the time. That's another thing, I spent so much more time on the course than I was paid for, but if you love a subject, you do this. But arranging to borrow these works of art took time, too, and getting them.

Riess: Who were your sources in San Francisco?

Caldwell: Well, the Haas family. Elise Haas had some beautiful things. There were several people who had really pretty distinguished pieces. Not very many, but still enough. I only could show one or two objects. After all, it wasn't like a great big museum case.

Riess: One of the things you did for Mills was build up their slide collection.

Caldwell: Yes, I did. I did that whenever I traveled. In 1958 I went to Asia, and I photographed a good deal. I gave all of my slides

to the art department at Mills. I have some in my own little specialty of Japanese 16th to 18th Century illustrated books. Those I've kept, and they go to the University of California when I die because they are good for research purposes on the graduate level.

Riess: That trip in 1958 was your first trip?

Caldwell: Yes, I went for a couple of months to Asia.

On my return from that trip, when I had my last look at first-rate works of Asian art in Honolulu, I felt so sad that I wouldn't see anything of any value in the way of Asian art until I traveled again, and I told Mr. Griffing, who was director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, how sad it was that San Francisco had no fine collection of Asian art. And he said, "Why don't you go back to San Francisco and get the Brundage collection?" (I should stop at that point probably, as we will speak more about that next time.)

Riess: Were there galleries in San Francisco that would have been valuable places for you to take your students to visit, like the Marsh gallery?

Caldwell: And Gump's? No. Gump's had a few good things, but they also had so many inferior things that it was not a good idea to confuse people. [laughs] I was opposed to Gump's because I felt that though they occasionally had excellent things, that they sold very poor things for the large part, wrongly identified.

Professional Crisis, and Resolution

Riess: When Easton Rothwell came to Mills he raised the salaries?

Caldwell: Yes. Oh, before that--. I just have to say that while Lynn White was there, I was fired, I was dropped, as an economy matter. Then a small sum was raised to keep me on for one year. And since the course was well-attended, they decided to give it again as part of the regular curriculum.

That was a terrible crisis, I'll never forget it. I think I probably was more upset by that than any personal experience--that had to do just with me, didn't have to do with

losing loved ones. That was a terrible crisis in my life. I couldn't believe it.

They were dropping courses all over, it wasn't personal at all. There never was any problem about that. They were dropping other courses too, as an economy measure. The way Berkeley is now, just exactly the same situation. But it was such a terrible crisis in my life.

I had given my whole effort to Mills College, so to speak. It was the focus--well, I can't say my family wasn't the focus, but you know when you have a profession you love, how much you identify with it. In that sense, it was a very strong focus. And my children were grown and on their own, so it was a frightful, frightful shock to me.

Riess: Did you look for teaching work anywhere else?

Caldwell: No. You see, there was no time that it stopped, because of a private fund. But it was a whole year that I wasn't paid by Mills College, but paid by private funds. I never stopped teaching. But I was humiliated by the fact that I wasn't on the regular faculty. And then the next year, I was taken on again.

Riess: How did the private funds come about?

Caldwell: Well, it was largely my mother's doing. Henriette Durham [Lehman] contributed a lot of money to that. And then Dorothy Erskine and a few friends--.

I was embarrassed. My mother was the one who initiated the idea of a private fund. I have to say, my mother was very distressed at my distress; I think in deference to her that I should record this.

Riess: And she made a donation to Mills?

Caldwell: Yes. Mother gave some, but not much. But mostly it was Henriette Durham and other people, a few other friends--Noel Sullivan. Mother asked them, of course; I would never dream of it.

Riess: To continue your position.

Caldwell: Yes. One awful year. [laughs] Then Mills picked it up again.

Riess: I'm glad I forced you to say that!

Caldwell: I forgot--I guess it was such a humiliation to me that I unconsciously buried it, but I didn't mean to.

Riess: So there was no teaching hiatus.

Caldwell: No, there really wasn't, no, that's right.

Neumeyer was terribly upset. He couldn't believe it, because he knew my classes had been so successful.

Riess: Yes, and besides which, it would double his work.

Caldwell: Well, he wouldn't take up Oriental art. Although the funny part of it was--and it used to infuriate my husband--one year, Neumeyer on sabbatical asked me to take over his survey course! [tape interruption]

Alfred Frankenstein--do you remember who he was?

Riess: Yes.

Caldwell: He and I were friends. He was teaching American art there, and we were both lecturers. And about--I forget how many years before we each retired, they made us full professors. Alfred always said that was our gold watch. [laughter]

But anyway, the title of "Professor" was an enormous help to me when I traveled in Japan, because status is so important there. I could have a card. It gave me an entree to places in Japan that I wouldn't otherwise have had.

Riess: I know that the article about you from the Mills Quarterly in 1971 referred to you as "Dr. Caldwell."

Caldwell: I never got a Ph.D., and I always--I never claimed to have that. It always was embarrassing to me, or rather annoying, because--you know, people. Sometimes even now over in the Asian Art Museum I'm referred to that way, and I feel it is inappropriate.

Further Teaching Experiences

Riess: After your retirement from Mills, you continued to teach in other programs?

Caldwell: Yes, I taught at St. Mary's College, a most unhappy experience. You see, St. Mary's has no academic standards by which they admit their students--anybody can go there. I found the students absolutely inattentive; to even the most exotic,

pornographic, Indian sculpture they were indifferent. The only time in my life I couldn't make any contact with my students.

Remember, they voluntarily enrolled in the course, it was not a requirement. When I was talking about the history of Asian art, starting with India, and I'd say, "In order to understand this art we have to talk about Buddhism." "We don't want to talk about Buddhism, we want to talk about Karl Marx," they'd say.

Riess: That was in the early seventies?

Caldwell: Yes, I retired from Mills in 1971, and it might have been a year later. But they were almost all sons and daughters-- because it was coeducational at that time--of wealthy people who maybe were not able to get into other institutions. They hadn't much intellectual focus.

Riess: Karl Marx is intellectual.

Caldwell: Yes, it sounds so, doesn't it. I think that was just a way of thumb-nosing the course and the whole idea of academic study. It was just a manner of speaking. Might have been Karl Marx or anything else, anything but the subject under discussion. And this was very hard on me, because I felt that my one talent was to interest people that knew nothing about Asian art in the subject. It was a great personal defeat!

I taught once in the summer at San Francisco State College, and I had something of the same problem, but not so acutely, insofar as they did not screen their students academically. So I had brilliant students along with students that were utterly hopeless. And I don't think I dealt with it very well, because I felt that in order to cover the material I had to offer I couldn't lower the standards.

By the way, I taught a lot of courses at Mills to alums, Mills alumnae groups. Those were very pleasant, well-attended and very pleasant. They were serious and they read and they really behaved themselves! Not quite as serious as students enrolled as undergraduates, of course, because they were going to be graded and had a future ahead of them, academically. But they were extremely intelligent and responsive people, and interested in Asian art.

I had done that kind of thing at the museums in San Francisco. But these were people, at Mills, who were more serious about learning. Even though they had no examinations to

take, I could tell whether they had done the reading by the kind of questions that they asked.

Riess: Did you end up leading them on tours to Asia?

Caldwell: No. I was urged to do that, over and over again. All kinds of inducements of free travel and so on. But I never wanted to do that, because I felt it was too fragmentary and disjointed. I talked to people, friends of mine, colleagues, who habitually got their ride to China undertaking this kind of leadership. I had no interest in doing this at all. I had been on so many trips led by other people and saw how heavy the responsibility for detail was, and I just decided that I never wanted to get involved.

Riess: The other teaching experience was for the Fromm Institute of Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco. How were those students?

Caldwell: The Fromm Institute was primarily for retired persons, hence senior citizens of advanced age. That was a funny thing. They were so excited, when I first came, not over me but over the thought they were getting a course in art history--they had not had one for a long time--so there was an enormous outpouring of people. But they didn't last very long, in terms of numbers.

I understand that was more or less routine; whenever there was a new course, this happened. It was very, very disconcerting to have these numbers diminish. But the thing of it was, so many of them were hard of hearing and unable to focus for any length of time. And I think I should have adapted my material more to the audience, instead of treating them as if they were Mills College students.

Research in Japan on Nara Ehon

Caldwell: I don't know that I mentioned before that at one time I traveled widely in Japan visiting private collections and photographing works of art--all books of one kind or another, either scrolls or actually in the Western sense a book form--because I was interested in Nara ehon, which means illustrated books of Nara. (That term, Nara ehon was the invention of book dealers at the turn of the century.) These books were utterly anonymous, and had extreme variations in style, unlike Japanese art which is pretty much traditional in various schools within given periods.

I got interested in this subject because of the extraordinary individuality shown among the many anonymous artists who contributed. My greatest contribution was to a very distinguished professor here at Berkeley--actually she's at Stanford, lives in Berkeley--who was a specialist in the literature that was used for those books. I was able to provide her, for the first time, pictures illustrating the text that she had been studying for a number of years.

Riess: Did you publish on that?

Caldwell: No, I never published anything on this at all, and that was because, while I had been encouraged when I was at the British Museum to go into this subject I had shown such an interest in, even without a fluent knowledge, let's say, of the Japanese language, I discovered in the course of time that I was really and truly encountering a stone wall not to know the language in depth. So I had really chosen a subject that was personally very defeating.

Riess: The stone wall was academically.

Caldwell: Not really. I had been told, or encouraged at the British Museum, that since these were all anonymous and you couldn't ever even date the books from the point of view of calligraphic styles, because they in turn were just traditionally copied, that it wasn't necessary to know the language. But I discovered, after dealing with these extraordinarily varied books, that not to be able to read the text and be sure you were getting every detail represented in the illustrations was frustrating. So I gave up any thought of publication.

Among other things, the subject itself was scorned at first by my academic friends: "How can you be interested in such an insignificant part of Japanese art?" But then Barbara Ruch, a woman at Columbia University in Japanese literature, "discovered," so to speak, the illustrations to the literature she had been talking about for so many years. She then made the subject of these illustrated books a matter of prime interest. There was an international symposium in New York City some years ago, and the only illustrations that they had for this conference were my illustrations, that I had photographed in museums and private collections in Japan.

I saw this subject, which had been down-played for so many years by my academic friends, raised to the most important research subject of the time. It was very amusing.

Riess: Any appropriate footnotes?

Caldwell: [laughs] Professor [John Max] Rosenfield of Harvard, who chaired the meeting, said I was "the grandmother" of this whole subject. But that was not exactly a remark that I felt was laudatory.

Riess: By your "academic friends," who do you mean? Where did you get to know the people in your field?

Caldwell: Well, I suppose because of symposia and invited lecturers. When you become very involved very seriously in any field--I'm sure you know that in librarianship--you get to know everybody. I attended many, many symposia, in New York, in Cleveland, in Chicago, and so on. Everybody knows everybody else. I didn't measure up to them, I never had a Ph.D. and had not done any publication. But they nevertheless tolerated me, to a certain extent.

Riess: How did you get onto the Nara ehon?

Caldwell: I was always interested in any evidences in Japanese art of individuality, other than in certain periods where there are very great artists. The Momoyama Period for example, where there were great artists who were highly individualistic. But as a kind of folk movement, as a kind of people's art, there seemed to be much more conformity and much less individuality.

There was an exhibition in Tokyo of these particular artists I got interested in, these anonymous people. I got hold of the catalogue and I went and visited the collections and met the people in Japan who had collected these works of art. And this was before it was popular: "Oh, what is she doing this for?" you know.

Riess: When did you discover this work?

Caldwell: Well, it was after my husband died. He died in 1965, and I then did a great deal of traveling. So it was probably in the seventies.

Riess: Did you find that doors were open to you?

Caldwell: Yes, I did. At that time they were extremely cordial to Westerners, and even to a Western woman. A Japanese woman

wouldn't have gotten to first base. But they were very, very open to my inquiries.

Of course, you always went with gifts. And I had, of course, to take an interpreter with me. I found an interpreter through the university at Kyoto, a student I would hire. And that's how I happened to do it.

Riess: Do you have a manner that you adopt when you are dealing with the Japanese?

Caldwell: Oh, I'm sure I was very inept. I don't think any Westerner, unless perhaps they had become residents of Japan for a quarter century, could ever begin to measure up to what's expected in courtesy in Japan. It's just hopeless. And they put on such a polite front that you're not aware of all of the terrible gaffes that you are making.

I do know that the gift-giving is absolutely essential, and I remember dropping and smashing on the doorstep of a house in one of these remote villages a most marvelous bottle of Scotch whiskey that I had brought. I was always very nervous going to these places. In retrospect I feel I didn't fulfill their expectations in terms of etiquette, but I did the best I could.

Riess: Is there any more on your work in Asian art scholarship that we have not discussed?

Caldwell: I've probably said before that the reason I went to Asia as often as I did after my husband's death was, first of all, he and I traveled a great deal in Europe, particularly in London, and I wanted to go places where we had never been, and not remember those companionable days. The other thing was, of course, he had not had any interest in Asia whatever. So just immersing myself in Asia served two purposes.

Continuing Professional Relationships

Riess: Have you what you would call proteges among your students at Mills?

Caldwell: I have a number of former students from whom I hear from time to time about how much the opening up of the field of Asian art had meant to them, when they'd travel and see these works of art in the flesh, so to speak, that they had only seen in terms of

lantern slides. Even now, after all these years of retirement, I quite often get some kind of reassurance of that kind.

I have one student who is very, very accomplished in the field of Chinese studies who started at Mills with me. But it is a pretty highly specialized field to go into in any university. And in small Mills College, which emphasized general culture, it was particularly unusual to find anybody continuing in the field.

I think that through Mills College, which gave a certain status to the teaching of the subject of Asian art, I was able to exert an influence in the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. I always felt that it was important for Mills to have contacts with the larger cultural world of San Francisco. So while I was teaching there I also kept up my contacts with the museum, and therefore also Mills's contacts with the museum, which has proved to be a very fine relationship with the woman who is teaching Asian art there now, Mary-Ann Lutzker. She is doing an excellent job of making a liaison between Mills and the museum. Her specialty is East Indian art. She is one of their [Asian Art Museum] most valued docent teachers.



Katherine Caldwell, Professor of Art, Mills College,
circa 1960.

Photograph courtesy of Mills College

VII THE BRUNDAGE COLLECTION

The Germ of an Idea, 1958

Caldwell: Now, the Brundage collection, let me tell you how it all started. I was very much distressed, as was Salmony, by the fact that well-intentioned San Francisco collectors had no background for judging what to buy, and that we had no collections of any importance in Asian art in the Bay Area. At the same time, we loftily called ourselves the Gateway to the Orient. We had Chinatown, we had Gump's--and that's another story: Gump's often times had beautiful works of art, but they also had many things that were not of quality. In any case, the point of it was we had no great works of Asian art.

I had gotten my degree at Harvard where I had worked, in connection with my classes, in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and had learned what great works of art of Asia were like. And as I have told you, in 1958 I took my one long trip away from my home, and went for two months to Asia alone. I had letters to all sorts of people, and I went to a number of countries, India, Thailand, Cambodia, Hong Kong, and especially Japan.

On the way home, I stopped at Honolulu--I told you this. And there I stopped over to see the then-director of that remarkable museum of Asian art, Bob [Robert] Griffing. I really stopped over, in addition to seeing their beautiful collections of Japanese and Chinese paintings, to have a chance to reinforce our friendship. And over lunch or dinner I bemoaned the fact that, "Bob, I won't see any first-rate Asian art until I travel again, I've got to go back to that Asian-art bereft city of San Francisco."

"Well," he said, "why on earth don't you get the Brundage collection? It's up for grabs, every city wants it, and Mr.

Brundage has been very disgruntled. He's broken his ties with the Chicago Art Institute, where his things have been kept. Why don't you go back and start an organization to acquire the Brundage collection for San Francisco?"

He said, "There's going to be a United Nations conference in San Francisco next year, and I'll be there, and I'll come and give you a lift."

A Lunch Meeting

Caldwell: Well, so I came home, and was of course enormously impressed with this idea, and followed a custom that my husband and I had had of, if we'd been absent for some time from the Bay Area, getting together with our dear friends the Erskines, Dorothy and Morse Erskine. The four of us went over to Mt. Tamalpais, stayed overnight, and had lovely, long conversations at breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Again I, so to speak, wept on Dorothy's shoulder, in the same way I had to Griffing, about the lack of an Oriental art collection in San Francisco. She said, "Oh, Kay," in her beautiful voice, "why, that's something we must do something about." (Dorothy didn't know about Oriental art, though she had great taste and some beautiful things. She, however, was a catalyst, and she always got people together that she felt could help one another.)

She said, "I'll arrange a lunch. You must not let this opportunity go by. I'll arrange a lunch, and I will invite to it some very powerful women in San Francisco, and you must tell them about the importance of getting the Brundage collection." Which she did. And at the lunch were Marjorie Stern, Alice Kent, and there's one person whose name I must provide for you--I can't think of it right now--who was really a resident of Portland but living in San Francisco. These are the people who came to the luncheon.

At the luncheon I spoke passionately about the need to get the Brundage collection for San Francisco. They were aware of it, and this is one thing, in retrospect--how shall I put it?--sometimes when people are involved later on in an organization, they forget when their interest began. And they had known of the existence of the Brundage collection, but had not had any particular impulse to do anything about it.

But at this luncheon, in any case, I told them about its importance, and then and there we decided to form an organization to try to get the Brundage collection. The actual organization took place at the home of Marjorie Stern. And this is where--if the question is, who started the Society for Asian Art--you see?

I've always said it was my idea, but it would never have been implemented without these powerful women. So it was a nice balance of talents or whatever, associations, whatever you want--of backgrounds. Never in the world as a college professor, or as a Berkeley academic wife, could I have moved the city of San Francisco to do anything about getting the Brundage collection. These women knew their way around city hall and were wonderfully, wonderfully effective.

Selling the Bond Issue

Caldwell: But that's the way it all started. And then the question was, Mr. Brundage, like so many self-made men, wanted something in return for his money. If he were going to give this collection to San Francisco, he wanted them then to build a wing for it, paid for by the taxpayers, not by Mr. Brundage. And that meant a bond issue, and this is where our effectiveness was shown.

I don't mean to say there weren't--after all, a public relations organization was hired also. There was a great deal of paid, Madison Avenue-type publicity for this, and promotion. However, what we did was to go to organizations, like the [International] Ladies Garment Workers [Union], and people--. You see, we had to reach people who had no background in Asian art, and who nevertheless were being asked to have their taxes increased in order to acquire this collection.

How on earth could we reach hairdressers and taxicab drivers and whatnot? Not to put them down, but simply their background did not include anything about Asia.

Riess: And how did you make that connection?

Caldwell: Well, I remember going to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union with slides and a projection machine, and showing works of art from the Brundage collection, and then asking if they'd like to ask questions about the works shown.

I'll never forget, the one question that was always asked was why are the Buddha's ears always long? And this is so easy to answer, because when he was in his pre-Buddhist life he had worn as a young prince heavy jewelry, and the heavy earrings had pulled his ears down. When he renounced all of his worldly life, he took off all his jewelry, but the ears remained elongated. It was such an easy thing to satisfy questions of that kind with the tradition. Of course, this is all you might say myth, but that's the tradition of how this happened.

So, we went to many, many organizations to sell the idea of acquiring this collection, and to emphasize its distinction and beauty. Very difficult on the beauty side for people who were raised in the Christian tradition of art, of course, or just the tradition of Western realism, representationalism.

Riess: Did you feel that you had to overcome some racism also?

Caldwell: I had no feeling about that at all, no. That never entered my head.

But this is what we did, and then we had somebody in the organization--this is not my brain wave at all--somebody in our organization had the idea of having fortune cookies made with a little "VOTE FOR THE BRUNDAGE COLLECTION" in it when you opened it up, all sorts of gimmicks of this kind.

Riess: Did you have strong support from the Chinatown residents?

Caldwell: You'd expect them to be supportive, but no, the Chinese have only more recently become interested in their own culture. In fact, we had one last year who was the president of our society. The recruitment of help from the Chinese community came late. Now it's enthusiastic, and much later, long after the acquisition of the Brundage collection, there is a society just for Chinese art in San Francisco. These people now take pride in their traditions.

Riess: And how about recruiting the Japanese community?

Caldwell: There are a few Japanese women who are strong workers in the Society for Asian Art at the present time, but they have not been as prominent--numerous, let's say. The ones that have worked are superb, but they haven't been as numerous as the Chinese.

Riess: But in the original group of women?

Caldwell: There were no Asians at all. None at all.

Riess: Were there any Asian curators at the de Young at that time?

Caldwell: No. None at all. There are several now, in the Asian Art Museum, but not at that time.

Riess: I'm trying to take the pulse of that time.

I can very well picture you doing the slide show for the garment workers, but did Mrs. Stern and Mrs. Kent also do that kind of thing?

Caldwell: Well, they were great fund-raisers, you see, and they also were very much in touch with the bureaucracy of city hall, trying to get the mayor and other high officials in San Francisco city government on our side. Their function was largely persuasion of people at a higher level. I was working with the hoi polloi.

Riess: Was anyone else working with the hoi polloi?

Caldwell: I don't remember anybody doing that.

Dorothy and Morse Erskine

Riess: Did Dorothy Erskine stay with it?

Caldwell: She did not work on it. No, she had done her part. You see, Dorothy believes, as does my wonderful Save the Bay friend across the street, Sylvia McLaughlin, that in order to get anything done in this world, you have to stick to one topic. I remember once saying to Dorothy, "Dorothy, I don't hear you express any dismay about our incarceration of Japanese citizens during the Second World War."

"Oh," she said, "Kay, of course I care, but I have to focus on the environmental problems of the Bay Area." So that explains her not being involved. She would, of course, support --I should probably say financially--our organization, but she wasn't a street worker on it, so to speak.

Riess: Tell me about the friendship with Dorothy and Morse Erskine.

Caldwell: My mother and stepfather knew them, and then Jim and I became just as close in friendship as Mother and Pops had. We used to see them on our own, apart from my parents.

Riess: They were more your contemporaries?

Caldwell: Well, they were sort of in between. They're a little bit older. Dorothy I think maybe was just under a decade my senior, something like that. But that didn't seem to make any difference.

Just as a footnote, after my husband died they invited me every month for a whole year up to Calistoga to their country retreat. It was a really caring kind of friendship.

Riess: And what was Morse Erskine?

Caldwell: A lawyer. He was of course very supportive of Dorothy's interests, but she was the one who was really the mover and shaker when it came to these organizations that she espoused. I would suppose there's never been anyone more effective than she was.

Dorothy Erskine had a great love of beauty. She had nothing in her house that wasn't beautiful, whether it was an electric light fixture--my stepfather was the same way--everything was beautiful in her house. She had the ability, which I have never learned, to throw away things that you are not using.

Riess: Did you go to the homes of Mrs. Stern and Mrs. Kent?

Caldwell: Oh, yes. We met in private homes. That's another thing: all our meetings took place in private homes. And at that time--the situation has changed spectacularly for the better--at that time these people had no academic training, Mrs. Stern, and eventually Marjorie--now Seller, but she was then Bissinger. She, by the way, was not in that initial luncheon group, but later, not too much later, Marjorie then-Bissinger, now-Seller, came into the organization and was enormously helpful.

Riess: Was she better trained?

Caldwell: No. Well, she had actually acquired some Chinese works of art of quality, and she was very active and an effective promoter.

The Purpose of the Society for Asian Art

Caldwell: When we had our first meeting, and later on, I was so eager that the organization should not become what I called a flower arrangement organization, a superficial travelogue type of lecture given, that we should have, like the Oriental Ceramic

Society of London, a wonderful organization of dedicated, not scholars, but collectors of great knowledge who would meet together and show their respective collections to one another.

I wasn't thinking in terms at that time that we were going to necessarily have sessions of exhibiting our private works, because there were not enough around to show, but the idea was that we would have a lecture program to inform the public. The important mission of the Society for Asian Art is to educate the public in Asian art.

The attitude here-to-fore toward Asian art had been purely decorative, almost a temporary effect in your home. However, I had been in London for quite a bit and had known the scholars of England and the people engaged in all sorts of professions that had nothing to do with Asian art. But nevertheless, the kind of training they have in the educational system in England seems to encourage continuing education after your degree. They have a deep desire for the knowledge.

So there are a number of people in England who have fine collections of Asian art. They weren't scholars, but very well informed. And they had formed the Oriental Ceramic Society, as I mentioned before, with the view of excellence: "How can we find works of art that we can buy or look at in museums that are of the finest quality of their period?"

And this was my mission in starting the Society for Asian Art. Let's not make it a lecture system, educating the public superficially. Let's really make it scholarly, not dully scholarly, not heavy, but to give people an idea of what really are the finest products that Asia has produced in various media. And I just preached this over and over and over.

My husband also became very much interested in the society, and he helped a great deal on phrasing some of their literature and handouts. They were very fond of Jim, liked having him participate.

Rene-Yvon Lefèbvre d'Argencé

Riess: What other academics were important?

Caldwell: Not any at that time. That came later. Remember, this was before the University of California had James Cahill. And d'Argencé, who was the first curator at the Asian Art Museum,

was not part of our group. As a matter of fact, we had some problems with him in terms of hostility.

Riess: You invited him?

Caldwell: Well, he came to some of our small meetings, yes. But we always had disagreements about how to--what to buy and what to use available purchase money for.

For example--this all occurred in 1958, by the way--once the Brundage collection was installed, there was an international symposium on the collection, with scholars from all over the world of very high quality. And of course, d'Argencé was very vocal on that, as curator.

After we had this symposium we had a surplus of maybe--it doesn't sound like much money now, \$20,000, but then it did. I think the surplus represented a surplus which was left over from the money that was appropriated for the symposium. And I'm not sure how that money was raised.

I must say another thing, that we in the Society for Asian Art made a great point of befriending Mr. Brundage. We entertained Mr. Brundage. And he was extremely nice to women, and he was very rude to men. One of the reasons we had such a hard time getting a director for the Asian Art Museum was because Mr. Brundage alienated, by his rudeness, so many men.

He also had a strong anti-Jewish prejudice, so that no Jew would he accept. And why, you might say, would we have to defer to him? Well, it was just part of our desire to show appreciation of his gift, and to exert what influence we could in the choice of a curator for the Asian Art Museum.

Riess: You said that d'Argencé was distressed because of your purchases from that \$20,000?

Caldwell: I didn't complete the thought there. We had an advisory group then, and on the advisory group were people who were in the academic world like Cahill and [Michael] Sullivan, and me, and then a few society women, the society women that had worked very hard. And an example of a problem we had with d'Argencé--you know, eventually he left under quite a cloud--we would say, "We're short on Chinese painting, why not get a Chinese painting?"

He'd say, "Oh, no, I need a computer machine," or something similar. We were trying to use the money for art, he wanted to use it for office equipment. The scholars in these meetings

that were charged with determining the use of the surplus funds all wanted to put the money into art, and he wanted to put it into office equipment. And we had terrible clashes. They sound petty, but they were violent, and vital to those of us that wanted to see the collection increase.

Riess: When you bought a Chinese painting, it would be put into the Brundage collection?

Caldwell: Oh, yes.

Riess: And it would be called part of the Brundage collection?

Caldwell: Yes, it would be.

Riess: Did Brundage have to approve selections that you made?

Caldwell: Interestingly enough, I don't think he did. However, there was another problem when it came to Japanese art.

But to complete that thought, d'Argencé then developed hostility toward all of us who were in the academic world, even wouldn't let us have access easily to the collections that were in storage. We had a very hard time with him.

He [d'Argencé] was originally a professor at the University of California. He was very much disliked, and he spent a great deal of his time traveling with Mr. Brundage, but prior to the acquisition of the collection. If Mr. Brundage would say, "Come, I want you to go to Switzerland, there's an auction," and so on, d'Argencé would leave his UC Berkeley classes and go. (Incidentally, d'Argencé, as a European, knew how to handle Mr. Brundage, and could take his hostility to men and deal with it.)

But d'Argencé then saw the writing on the wall that he was not going to be kept at UC Berkeley. And Jim Cahill then succeeded him. I'm not quite sure of the order of the events, but in any case, by the time this money was available after the symposium, Cahill was here and on this committee.

Riess: If d'Argencé had been a long-standing friend of Brundage's, can we say that d'Argencé was important in getting the collection?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, absolutely. No doubt about that.

There's just one other amusing incident, an intimate exchange I had with d'Argencé. We, all of us, the scholarly people, wanted catalogues for the different civilizations--the Cambodian, the Chinese, the Japanese--printed as soon as

possible for the information for the public. We were all interested in making this collection available to the public.

Another possible use of the money, if you weren't going to spend it on painting, was to get specialized people, not in d'Argencé's specialty, to come and edit these catalogues. And d'Argencé said to me, "Katherine, Mr. Brundage has said I am the only one who can edit the catalogues." "Well," I said--and he never forgave me for my reply--"then you must believe in reincarnation, Yvon, because nobody could do all of that in one lifetime." [laughs]

I thought these little personal things might be of interest. I don't know. Are they too petty?

Riess: No, they're not too petty. Did all of this happen in 1958?

Caldwell: Well, no. I've forgotten which month the symposium took place. This was ongoing for the year or so afterward, I would say.

Riess: What was the purpose of the symposium?

Caldwell: Well, it was to publicize and make known to the public what was there. It was a huge international affair. Funds were raised to bring scholars who couldn't afford it from Japan and China and Korea, everywhere.

Riess: There are stories of the machinations of Brundage, toying with people, later issues of money and getting the rest of the collection, and paying for purchases. Did you have a part in any of this?

Caldwell: No. I knew Brundage quite well, but not more than socially. He was very anxious to get a tax write-off, you see, for giving his collection, and he once approached me about making some kind of a statement, as a Mills College functionary, to further that idea.

The Docent Program

Riess: What more did you do, how were you involved, after the success of acquiring the collection?

Caldwell: Oh, then the idea was to organize what became this remarkably successful docent program. We had two functions: one was to have lectures, which usually occurred once a month.

Riess: The Society sponsored lectures?

Caldwell: Oh, yes. The Asian Art Museum and the Society for Asian Art are two separate entities. The Asian Art Museum is funded by the City of San Francisco. The Society for Asian Art is entirely a private, voluntary organization, that has one little dark room for an office in the building.

But the thing of it is that our efforts to get the Brundage collection, the Society, all of this existed before they had found a director and set up the mechanism of the Asian Art Museum, which is a city-funded organization. Our efforts preceded the formal finding of a director, and setting up the bureaucratic function for running the museum.

Riess: The women who raised the funds were raising funds to house the collection.

Caldwell: Yes, and the funds were raised by a bond issue. That is the money that paid for the wing for the Asian Art Museum.

Riess: Were there men in the early days of the Society for Asian Art?

Caldwell: Yes. The husbands were all involved, they all came to these meetings held in private houses. For a couple of years, I think--I'd have to check that--we met in private houses, and set up our priorities. We felt once the collection had been acquired, the next thing was to make it available to the citizens of San Francisco, so they'd know something about it.

And that's where I feel that our function was so important, because it wasn't just supposed to be confined to the elite, but to reach out to the schools and to the public at large. The way to do that, of course, was to establish the docent program, and so we started that. Again, just as I had urged that the quality of the lectures be serious and specialized, so we felt that the people teaching the docents, preparing the docents, should be people of quality, academic quality. So those were our contributions, I think, to the education of San Francisco.

Riess: Was there a docent program already in place in other collections in the de Young?

Caldwell: I don't think so. I may be wrong, but I think that came after. We have to check that to be sure.

Riess: Setting up the docent program, who really set that up?

Caldwell: Actually, many of these women who had previously not known about Asian art were themselves acquiring libraries and studying, so that the function of any academic was rather an educative one. I mean to say, we didn't go in for the bureaucracy of the thing.

They set up an advisory board, at first entirely--well, it still is, with one exception--composed of people in the academic world. This was the advisory group, the one on which I still serve. And that's where the scholars came in, in terms of helping to set policy.

Riess: Did they teach in the docent program also?

Caldwell: Yes. And some of them for a while were graduate students from the University of California.

Riess: They were paid to do this?

Caldwell: When they eventually got people of the status of Cahill and Sullivan, I think that they paid them. In my own experience, I was paid for individual lectures from time to time. But of course, these society women all donated their time.

At first the docent program was a very small undertaking. I, at the beginning, had charge of the Japanese art, and yes, I was paid a small sum. Now the teachers, the professors, are paid. And of course, many of the lectures in the docent program are given by the curators of the museum, who are of course on the city budget.

Riess: It's probably the most scholarly docent program I've heard of.

Caldwell: Yes, I think it is.

Riess: People can take the classes and not become docents?

Caldwell: Yes, anybody can come if they pay a fee. That's perfectly true.

It interested me very much that in the beginning the society ladies, so to speak, would not introduce a speaker, because they felt they didn't know enough. We would always be the ones to introduce whoever was going to speak. Now, for several years, they have studied so much themselves, and they're so confident in public speaking, which they were not originally, that they take over all of that function. They are completely competent to get the scholarly material together on the speaker's background. I am much impressed with that, and very, very admiring.

Riess: At the same time that they were becoming so expert, they were probably also becoming collectors?

Caldwell: Yes.

Riess: Has there been a boom in collecting in San Francisco?

Caldwell: I would ask Pat Berger, one of the curators, for facts on that. I wouldn't know how much would be a boom. There aren't, after all--I mean, works of art of the quality we want are an enormous price, so you couldn't have a really popular group of collectors. That wouldn't have been possible.

Riess: The Adrian Gruhn CourtRoom and the Cyril Magnin Room, what do they represent?

Caldwell: Well, we were just awfully glad to have people donate money.

Riess: Did you solicit money or gifts?

Caldwell: No, I did no fundraising or soliciting.

Riess: Mrs. Adrian Gruhn, for instance, was she a board member?

Caldwell: She might have been a board member.

Jan Fontein, and the Asian Art Museum Directorship

Caldwell: You have to make a distinction between the Society for Asian Art and the Asian Art Museum. The Asian Art Museum set up its own staff, and we are, as I said before, voluntary. They are an established city function.

Riess: Was that the result of some problems within the museum?

Caldwell: Well, there were a lot of problems. See, originally the idea is that they had one director for the entire museum, both East and West. Now, want to turn that off a minute while I think? [tape interruption]

Before there was a sufficient appreciation of expertise in the Asian field on the part of the community they invited Jan Fontein over here. Here he had a fine position at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and they wanted him to leave that for a temporary trial in San Francisco. Of all impractical ideas,

how anyone could give up a very fine, prestigious job to come on trial! And so, of course, that was out of the question.

Jan Fontein told me--I became quite well acquainted with him--he told me that he didn't see how you could ever be a director of a museum in San Francisco and carry on any scholarly work, because every museum director is expected to be at a dinner party every night. He thoroughly disliked the idea of coming to San Francisco for these reasons, and he turned it down. Eventually he got to the Boston Museum, far more prestigious. The Freer and the Boston are in a different category.

Riess: Clarence Shangraw?

Caldwell: He was studying here at Berkeley with Cahill. He came later.

Riess: Was it Brundage's requirement that there be a separate Asian art commission, a separate organization associated with his collection?

Caldwell: Yes, absolutely, he wanted it to be separate. And eventually that's what happened, that the administration of the Asian Art Museum is autonomous. This he insisted on. That was not the original intention, but Brundage very much wanted it to be that way.

Stories of Avery Brundage

Caldwell: I was on the search committee to try to find a director, and a problem in getting direction was Brundage himself. I'll never forget one of the funniest experiences I ever had. I was down in the basement, and Brundage--this was when they were opening things in his collection. The then-curator of Asian art from the Freer Gallery in Washington, wonderful man, was there, and Mr. Brundage would say, "Now, what's this? What's this?"

"Well, Mr. Brundage, it could be 12th Century, or it might even be 18th Century." On and on and on, never "It's such-and-such." Finally Brundage said, "Well! Since you don't know, then my opinion's just as good as yours!"

This I say not in too much scorn of Mr. Brundage, because he didn't at that time understand the difference between the educated and the uneducated guess. Eventually he came to have respect for the scholar, but at that time he just thought, "If

you can't say it's such-and-such, then I'm just as good as you are," you know. And that was of course a problem for a highly educated person. But he did learn, he did learn.

Riess: Because of the Olympics committee, and the businessman and sports connection, had he friends in town?

Caldwell: Did he have friends in San Francisco before? I don't know about that. But he made friends with patrons of art in the city.

But I have to tell you one more thing, if you don't mind, a personal thing with Brundage. He had his collection in Chicago, as you may know, and he yanked it out of the Art Institute because of some dispute with that museum. In fact he really and truly had a frightful difference of opinion, to put it mildly, with the director of the Chicago Art Institute. There was a hotel that he owned in Chicago, the LaSalle Hotel, and he stored in room after room after room works of art he had collected.

He had urged those of us who had been working with him in the Society for Asian Art, if we ever came to Chicago, to get in touch with him. My husband was busy with something else, so I called up Mr. Brundage and he said, "Oh, come and have dinner with Mrs. [Elizabeth] Brundage and me. That will be just fine. But let me show you first my works of art in the LaSalle Hotel."

This is what he did: he'd open a door, and it would be jammed full of, say, Thai sculptures. You hadn't had a chance to look at a thing before he slammed the door. He wanted you to see how much he had, not the quality. Door after door was opened, and you would be dying to really examine something, slam, slam, slam.

I went out to his house for dinner, just with him and Mrs. Brundage. She was a charmer, and he was terrible to her. Everybody knew how rude he was to this lovely Mrs. Brundage. She would say, "Now, Avery, I think Mrs. Caldwell might like to see such-and-such in those drawers." Getting up from the table as if she'd asked him to go and take some castor oil or something, he would open this desk and roughly take some of these things out, or else open something she had not asked to show. It was the most terrible evening from the point of view of relationship to husband and wife I've ever had.

Riess: Was she expert herself?

Caldwell: I don't really know what to say about that. I have no idea.

Another time, Jim and I were down in Santa Barbara. He [Brundage] really and truly liked to be approached, you know. I think he was insecure and lonely. So he very much liked to have people look him up, because Jim and I were not people who look up somebody just because they were a big name. Anyway, we went down there one time and had a similar experience of being welcomed and shown around. That was before those things down there burned up. I just thought you might be interested in those personal experiences.

Riess: Did you ever talk with Mr. Brundage about any specific pieces?

Caldwell: No, I never wanted to, after having witnessed this scene that I spoke to you of before when he felt that he knew as much as anybody else. I never talked to him about art at all, only about how to get his collection for San Francisco, and how to get him some kind of a tax deduction. He was obsessed with getting a tax deduction.

Riess: When Griffing in Hawaii said, "By all means, get the Brundage collection," what was there for you to see at the time?

Caldwell: I had seen pictures of things that were in the Art Institute in Chicago. Bronzes, mostly. The Chinese bronzes were the great thing. The Chinese bronzes are by far the most distinguished things in his collection.

Activities of the Society for Asian Art

Caldwell: I had something very touching yesterday. Two of the women who are on the board came over. They're dear friends, and they came over because I had been sick, but also they wanted to have a little private group on the Japanese art here at my house. Isn't that nice? I don't know that I can do it or not.

Riess: A study group?

Caldwell: A study group, yes. It's nice.

I wanted to resign from the board because I thought I was too old, not doing enough. They insist I remain. When I went to the annual advisor's meeting last Sunday I just had a wonderful time. They're awfully welcoming to me, all of these people. I went over with Jim Cahill and David Keightley. David Keightley is a great, great scholar on early Chinese

archaeology. He figured out from early inscriptions on animal bones when the Chinese language was formed. [tape interruption]

Riess: Was the group always called the Society for Asian Art?

Caldwell: The official name? This I must tell you about, and another thing--two things I must tell you. We had a great to-do about what to call it. It's the Society for Asian Art, not of but for.

Ours was really an educational organization. We had Monday night lectures--not every Monday--with scholars. Because our budget is small we try to be alerted about distinguished people coming on their own budget through the city, and then nail them down for a lecture, because we can't pay to have them come just to lecture to our Society.

One of my contributions to the Society for Asian Art was the suggestion that we establish a scholarship for a graduate student in Asian art. At first, they were very recalcitrant, but now they are very, very proud of the fact that we have a fund for a graduate student in Asian art. And I've been very much interested in that.

Riess: And this fund allows them to study in the collection for a period of time?

Caldwell: Yes. And there's another thing the Society does that is very, very generous and civic-minded, and that is that they will fund, to the extent of their financial ability, an exhibition in another place, for example at Mills. Several times they have financed, say, a catalogue for an Asian art show there, or something like that. Maybe at Stanford. Which I think is very broad-minded, not just a little insular sort of closed organization.

Riess: When they have the lectures are they advertised widely, or is this just for the membership?

Caldwell: Oh, they get out a regular bulletin, and those are very interesting. I'm glad you brought that up. Because they have articles in them by scholars, as well as notices of people, of coming events and so on, and a list of the officers of the society. But they are oftentimes very interesting.

Harry Packard

Caldwell: There is another story in connection with the Brundage collection that I should put in here, and it is in the category of regrets about things I did not do. We could have had one of the great collections of Japanese art for \$1 million, which the Metropolitan bought for \$2 million.

There was a man--Harry Packard was his name, he's still alive--another one of these amazing people with no academic background who had incredible taste. He was an American, but bilingual, and he was in the army at the time of the occupation of Japan. He just went around buying these beautiful Japanese works of art for nothing. His collection was housed for several years in the basement of the Oakland Public Library main building for earthquake and fire purposes. Mr. Brundage was prevailed upon to buy it, but at that time, Japanese art was not of any interest to him.

The reason I mention that now is I wish I had just gotten out and blown the trumpet, gotten hold of wealthy people in San Francisco and said, "We mustn't lose this." I didn't.

Riess: He collected it during the occupation, and then it stayed in Oakland?

Caldwell: Yes, he lived around here, and he just brought them here. But it became known that these things were of very great value. And there they were. I can wring my hands over not having done anything about that. I am just not a mover and shaker.

Riess: Brundage knew the collection? He had seen it?

Caldwell: Oh, yes, he was approached to buy it. But no.

Riess: Why wouldn't he?

Caldwell: Well, it didn't interest him. There are some very fine Japanese works of art now in the Brundage collection, but for some reason or other this didn't take with him. And of course, it would have been hard, I think, to raise a million dollars for it. But even so, I have regrets.

Riess: In an essay on Brundage in the catalog, The Art of Japan: Masterworks in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco [published by the Asian Art Museum, 1991] I read that Harry Packard had created a notebook for Brundage on dealers, et cetera, in Japan.

Caldwell: I didn't know that.

Incidentally--here's another story--Harry Packard and [Otto] Maenchen eventually became good friends, but I remember once they had a frightful and embarrassing confrontation.

Riess: What was the story?

Caldwell: Well, Harry Packard had no academic background, certainly not in art, but he was always kind of poking his nose in here and there, and he just appeared one day with his baby in Maenchen's class. At that time I was studying at UC Berkeley, and of course I was attending Maenchen's class, and Packard came in with the baby and sat there, reclined for a long time. And then he put his hand up because he wanted to ask a question, and Maenchen did not recognize him.

He did not put his arm down, he just kept it there for at least ten minutes, maybe longer. Finally he said, "Mr. Maenchen, are you going to let me ask my question, or are you afraid you won't know the answer?" I was there! I heard that with my own ears! And so of course, there was a great animosity that built up. In the course of time they became friends, and when Maenchen went to Japan, Packard was very, very hospitable.

Riess: If Packard had no background how did he collect?

Caldwell: I think it's largely his own what I call--well, like absolute pitch in music. It's something inborn. It was the second time I've seen that. I may have told you, when I was a graduate student at Harvard they admitted one student whose grades were not quite acceptable. And he was the one that was always right about identifying something--he was a C student who was always A-double-plus on identification.

Riess: Earlier Brundage had offered his collection to UC Berkeley, to UCLA, to Stanford.

Caldwell: He offered it so many places, I can't remember exactly which museums. You see, he did have conditions about public financing of the building. It wasn't as though he were willing to finance it.

For example, the Atkins Gallery in Kansas City, the Nelson Gallery, the man who left that building had the good sense to know that the distinction of the building depended on its contents, and he left a huge purchase fund. Incidentally, Langdon Warner comes in on that, because he and his most brilliant graduate student, Laurence Sickman, went to China

before the communist revolution and bought--one of the greatest collections in the world of Chinese painting is in Kansas City. This is apropos of the attitude of someone who leaves funds.

VIII A TOUR OF 3 VINE LANE

Caldwell: [Talking in Kay's study] This little room I dearly love. It's always a mess, Suzanne, but it is my favorite room. It's where I live, a good deal.

That is a Hassam, one of our great American Impressionists. Maybe it doesn't hit you, that "Moonlight," but I love that one. That goes to the Achenbach Collection in San Francisco [Fine Arts Museums, Palace of the Legion of Honor] when I die. Childe Hassam did all three of these pictures. This one is a watercolor, and this one's an oil.

And that is a picture of Colonel Wood, painting with Hassam in the Oregon desert. This is Pops--"C.E.S.W."--and this is Hassam. That's the reason the picture is here.

Riess: In shirt-sleeves in the desert.

Caldwell: And that is the painting, "Thunderstorm on the Oregon Trail." [1908].

Riess: What about the portraits?

Caldwell: Those are not done by anybody of importance. Those are my children. My son's hair--he didn't have any hair until he was eighteen months old, and then every hair came in a little curl like that. And poor Sara, with her straight hair. Of course, nowadays straight hair is "in."

Riess: This portrait on the steps [descending to the living room] is Colonel Wood?

Caldwell: Yes. It was not done by a famous artist, but it is absolutely a verisimilitude. It is absolutely exactly the way he looked.

Riess: And this, also of Colonel Wood, is a Stackpole drawing. Was it a drawing for a sculpture?

Caldwell: No, he didn't ever do a sculpture. He did a sculpture of me, but he didn't do one of Colonel Wood. That's a funny thing. I wonder why he never did. I guess they commissioned him to do the one of me. That's downstairs, and it goes to Mills College.

Riess: What about this chair?

Caldwell: Well, Mother and Pops had the chair. You see, it's not my style, it's English, and I happen to like Chinese furniture, heavy stuff.

That's a Tibetan tanka that Mother and Pops had. I don't ever remember seeing it up, in their house. It's a very nice one. It has an inscription on the back of it that was translated by somebody over at the [Asian Art] Museum. It comes from a temple in Lhasa.

The dining room means a lot to me because I've had heaven-knows how many, innumerable, countless, small dinner parties. My idea of the best way to entertain is at a small dinner party, preferably six, a maximum of eight. My husband always used to say, in this room, that the whole idea of a small dinner party is group conversation, and he used to pound on the table if it weren't. Which of course a man can do better than a woman! [laughing]

Riess: [In dining room] This furniture came from Los Gatos?

Caldwell: Yes, practically everything, except the little Scandinavian piece over there.

Riess: Was it imported from China in a suite?

Caldwell: [laughs] Oh, no, Mother and Pops never did anything in suites. Everything was individual for them. Actually, they never used this dining room table, they didn't like this table, and they had a large 17th century English dining room table at Los Gatos that held a great many more people than this one does.

Riess: This was bought in Chinatown?

Caldwell: Yes. See, they lived up on Russian Hill, just above Chinatown, and you could walk down there. And in the twenties there was an abundance of furniture from mainland China.

The Korean vase over there is very special. That goes to the Asian Art Museum when I die. It has a rare design on it. It's 18th century. It's something that Pops had bought at some time or other, and I happen to love it. I have had offers for it a great many times. There is a collector down in Los Angeles who would like to have it, but I've turned him down.

I'll tell you something funny about that: he would come back every year and offer me more money for it. And I would say, "But Bob, I like it, I want to keep it 'til I die." And then I said, "I'll tell you something"--I lowered my voice, I whispered it to him--I said, "I'm saving it for my ashes." Of course I didn't mean that, but he went as white as the vase and never asked me for it again.

Riess: Why is it particularly special?

Caldwell: You have to know about Korean ceramics to know. The design on it is unusual.

This Japanese print, the Utamaro, is of no value because the color has long since faded, long before I inherited it. But [James A.] Michener, the great authority on Japanese prints, was here one time at dinner and he said, "Doesn't it look beautiful, just as a design on the wall?" which I thought was a very gracious thing for him to have said.

There's been many a dinner party here, of people of all kinds and descriptions. Jim used to feel that we should never have a party that was just all academic.

Riess: What about this Ray Boynton, Kay?

Caldwell: I think he must have been doing things like that, designs of that type, when he was working on the mural at Mills College. On the other hand, it's very similar to what he did at Los Gatos.

Riess: It is about 8" by 18", inscribed, "To C.E.S.W. on his eightieth birthday." Ray Boynton.

Caldwell: Have you seen Mother and Pops's bookplate? It was taken from the design he [Boynton] did for their big mural down at Los Gatos.

Riess: Was this wall originally panelled?

Caldwell: No, that has cardboard behind it. And my husband put all this--. It looked so perfectly terrible with the redwood [and

cardboard]. We would never have covered redwood, of course, but it was a terrible cardboard, and my husband had the brilliant idea of covering it with this [grasscloth] and that's what he did.

Riess: When you bought this house--

Caldwell: --in 1941, by the way--

Riess: --had there been major changes to the house?

Caldwell: No, no major changes. After all, it was an architect-designed house. We wouldn't have made any major changes.

Riess: Did you buy it from the people for whom it was designed--by John White?

Caldwell: No. It had been in more than one hand.

Riess: You did say it was John White?

Caldwell: That is what [Kenneth] Caldwell thinks. But Mrs. White told me that Maybeck designed it. So there you are. I think they worked together so closely that until Maybeck's name became so much more famous they made little distinction as to who did what.

Riess: And what year was the house built?

Caldwell: Three years after the Berkeley fire, in 1926.

Riess: I love this sofa. Maybe it's just the cushions.

Caldwell: Yes. That's again this combination of Chinese with Chinese designs on the big cushions, and the Persian ones on the other. Pops didn't care about that, he just wanted beautiful things. And if you look at pictures you can see how it was arranged in their own house.

I wonder, does it look differently than when Jim was here? A lot of things were rearranged because my mother died after Jim died, so that some of this furniture came from her house, and after his death.

Riess: The scrolls on either side of the fireplace?

Caldwell: I got those from Jim Cahill. They are Japanese, 18th century.

And over the fireplace, that's something quite interesting, that's a rubbing from a cave, a Buddhist cave in China. It's a rubbing right from the original stone; it's not a photograph of a rubbing. It's of a flying deity. Can you see the garments blowing in the wind? And the pattern underneath that looks like a plant, is not, it's a convention for clouds, in Chinese art.

I felt that it was important that we have something airy over there, flying up in the air. Originally we had a Calder mobile here. It was loaned to us, and it was quite beautiful, but it fell down one day. And it was made up of great big iron pieces, and had anybody been under it they probably would have had their head split open! So we never put it back, we gave it back to Peggy Hayes, Calder's sister, who had loaned it to us.

Riess: How did that fit in to this house?

Caldwell: It looked wonderful. The house absorbs almost anything beautiful, you know, it doesn't matter what civilization or period it comes from.

The wood block print over there was by a famous Japanese priest named Nichiren, and I got that from R.E. Lewis, quite a famous print dealer. He lives in Marin County and he has a mail-order business for the most part. He is so famous he doesn't have to maintain a showroom.

Riess: When you went on your many trips to Asia did you bring back important pieces?

Caldwell: No, I never had any money to do anything. I never bought anything, no. No, I never did at all. Anything I have of any value I have inherited. I did buy that Nichiren, but very few [other things].

A friend of mine gave me the flying Bodhissatva. She had lived in China, and knew absolutely nothing about Chinese art at first--she knows a lot now--and she had a huge chest full of these beautiful rubbings. (A rubbing is done by inking whatever you are going to imprint on your paper, and putting this wet paper down on the stone.) Anyway, she had an extraordinarily fine collection of these rubbings that she had acquired when she lived in China. She was an artist, and not an art historian, and she had an instinctive appreciation of these beautiful things.

Riess: Your bookcases, they look like they are full of old editions.

Caldwell: The room was designed without bookcases, and my husband lamented the fact that there was no bookcase in the room. He said there should never be a room, other than maybe a kitchen, that doesn't have books in it. I felt it was a terrible thing to do to the Maybeck house--or Maybeck-White house, whatever you want to call it--but he wanted it so badly that as a surprise one Christmas I had it made for him. And I'd say he was right, I think it warms the room a great deal to have the bookcase there.

Riess: Is there an important book collection there?

Caldwell: No, there's not. Anything of importance has gone to The Bancroft Library or to the Huntington. There are some nice books there, but none of any great note.

Riess: [Looking at a book about Ishi] Did you know Theodora Kroeber?

Caldwell: I knew her quite well. I belong to an organization called Woman Geographers that she belonged to. The Woman Geographers still exist.

Riess: Tell me about it.

Caldwell: It started originally--it had Amelia Earhart in it at one time, for example. (Of course, I never knew her.) Then there weren't enough women geographers, so they extended the membership to people of rather unusual disciplines. In other words, Asian art was all right, but if I had been in Renaissance art I wouldn't have been asked, you know. And so I belonged to this extraordinary group. They were mostly women in the sciences, in the physical sciences.

Riess: Exploring new frontiers.

Caldwell: That's right, you have the right language.

Riess: Was it located out here?

Caldwell: No, it was in Washington, D.C. But we have a very lively chapter here, and one or two women of considerable distinction in the physical sciences.

Riess: Where did you meet?

Caldwell: We used to meet in private houses. They often met here. But it became so large that we couldn't handle the number, especially as guests were often invited. So now one of our members is in a retirement place, Piedmont Gardens, and she has permission for us to meet in the social hall of that institution, and that's

where we meet. Every time we meet, some specialist gives a talk. So it's not just social, it's focused on something quite serious each time.

Riess: And they continue to bring in new members.

Caldwell: Oh yes, and mostly very young women, very able young people. It's a nice mixture of generations, because of course there are a lot of old people too. But we have new members, and we have scholarships too.

Riess: And Theodora?

Caldwell: I knew her quite apart from that organization, I knew her just socially. I don't remember where I first met her. And I knew her husband somewhat too, just because I was interested in the art. And in the University community you meet people on a dual basis, I think, of social and professional.

Riess: And why do you have this book on your coffee table about the goddess by Joseph Campbell.

Caldwell: I am very much interested in Joseph Campbell--actually this book doesn't belong to me--but I am very interested in what he has done on Indian art.

I have some friends, a group of women in the Asian art group [Society for Asian Art] in San Francisco who came over. They wanted to have a little study of folk art, and they just happened to have brought that book along. They were going to come over on May Day, and we were going to have a little study of Japanese folk art.

Riess: And you will lead the study?

Caldwell: I will be leading it, along with the curator of Japanese art in San Francisco, a woman named Yoshiko Kakudo. I think that will be fun, an interesting thing to do. I think for the most part the attraction of folk art is its great simplicity; in a complex world it's very restful to look at. We're going to compare what pieces we have in our own collections. I have a few ceramic pieces--it's mostly in ceramics anyway--which I bought. That I have done, I've bought a few ceramics.

Riess: Tell me about that little chair.

Caldwell: I call it a conversation piece. It is unusual because of the ceramic rather than carved wood inset. It's just an oddity, really. We never use it, it's utterly hopeless to sit in, it's

not designed for the human spine. It's Chinese, but it's Chinese with a lot of Western influence in it too, and it was not made for--. I'm sure no Chinese--they're so practical--would ever have made such an uncomfortable chair to sit in.

Riess: What about that bookcase?

Caldwell: That's something that Mother and Pops found in a second-hand store down in San Jose. It was painted, but Pops saw that it was a nice thing, and he had it all taken off. There are some nice things in there, several books that are autographed by Robinson Jeffers. A few nicely-autographed things.

Riess: Is that an eagle on top?

Caldwell: Yes, that is one of those Chinese carvings, like others I have in the front hall, that the Chinese use in their architectural decoration. If Jim had lived, we were going to build a little house on our seaside property in Mendocino County, and we thought a predatory bird like that would be very appropriate up there on the coast.

The clock came from Jim's family.

Riess: I don't know anything about Jim's family.

Caldwell: Jim's family were from the South. They came to Virginia. There was a great Caldwell gathering there several years ago, and that was how I knew what strong ties they had with the South. But Jim was not brought up in the South, he simply knew that he had relatives there, all of whom he welcomed happily. He was very fond of his family, very strongly fond of his family, but they had not lived in the South; in his generation, they were in Minnesota.

Oh, take that down [to Riess, who is walking toward bookcase]. That's a very rare piece. My son wants to have it. That's called the "great horned spoon." It comes from the Northwest coast, it's Indian. See that beautiful carving on it? This is made out of one horn, isn't that astonishing? They have a great collection of these up in Portland.

Riess: Horn of what?

Caldwell: Well, I don't know. Pops always called it the "great horned spoon." I took everything he said, you know, verbatim.

Riess: It looks like wood to me.

Caldwell: It does, doesn't it? But I am sure it really was a horn. That's one thing that Pops would not have been wrong about.

The little sculptures [in the bookcase] there are supposedly 8th century Chinese tomb figures. But the trouble is, they can copy things so easily, one can't be sure. Some people think that they are authentic, and some don't. One dealer offered me quite a lot of money for them who believed them to be authentic. But I think they are perfectly charming.

Riess: It sounds like you have had a number of dealers looking at things.

Caldwell: Oh, one dealer tells another. Yes. And after Mother died I sold some things and gave things to museums because I didn't want the burden of having a whole lot of valuable things around.

Riess: On this high table is a Bufano head of a girl, with blue glaze.

Caldwell: Well, my step-father gave him the money to go to China to learn to do that particular kind of blue glaze. This is one of the figures that he did after that. I don't know who it is, I have no idea. I have one more Bufano, a ceramic sculpture downstairs of a Christ figure.

Riess: Downstairs?

Caldwell: There is an awful storage room downstairs--it's not a piece that I am interested in, at all, not at all.

Riess: Now what about out here in the foyer?

Caldwell: Oh yes, the little Indian pieces. I bought them when I was there in 1958. Little stone pieces. (One of them is wood--I just got that at Cost Plus.) The little stone pieces I got in India, and they are quite early. The female figure is probably 2nd century, and the other one may be 5th century. They are going to go to Mills College. The woman who teaches Indian art there, she'll love having them.

Riess: The Bodhissatva? That was your parents'?

Caldwell: Yes, Mother was going to burn that up because it had bugs in it, but I saved it and had a great expert restore it. I phoned a friend in Washington, at the Freer Gallery, and he told me about--. You can see that it had fabric on it, and it had gold at one time. It is probably maybe 17th century.

Riess: What will become of this?

Caldwell: This goes to the Zen Center in Berkeley. I hope they will put it in the zendo. It's not quite good enough for the Museum. That is to say, it's good enough, but they have other similar things. They don't need another Bodhissatva of this kind.

Riess: What has been your association with the Zen Center?

Caldwell: When I was in Japan in 1958 I got interested in Zen art, the gardens, you know, and many of the paintings. So I studied their doctrines in order to understand in greater depth the relationship to the painting. I was not converted, but I got very much interested.

Riess: And meditation is part of your life?

Caldwell: It was for a while. And it would probably do me good if it were to become a part of it again.

Riess: These bookcases [in foyer] were here?

Caldwell: These were here. This room was added, not by us, but this is the way the house was when we bought it. Somebody who loved flowers did it--you'll notice there is a drain here for water. And I understand there was a fountain over in the wall; behind that bench there's a place in the wall you can see there was some kind of opening.

These [bronze] reliefs of Mother and Pops you might be interested in. This one [of Mother] was done by Stackpole. And this one of Pops [1896] was by a famous artist. Olin Warner was his name.

[interruption]

Caldwell: [At bookcase] This is inscribed "For James Caldwell, in memory of a delightful afternoon last year," Robinson Jeffers, Tor House [1927].

Riess: What will you do with these Jeffers books?

Caldwell: I don't know. What shall I do with the inscribed books?

Riess: "Dear Sara, I'll be happy and deeply moved to visit The Cats again and to see you and the Mathiases," Robinson Jeffers.

Caldwell: Here are Jim's own notes on T.S. Eliot. He was crazy about T.S. Eliot.

Riess: From Genevieve Taggard: "To Kay Field, who helped with the title, this book, written for her generation more than for any other person, 'For Eager Lovers.'" 1922.

How did you help with the title?

Caldwell: I don't remember.

Pops loved these nicely-bound books. He would have them bound by a woman named Caro Weir Ealy, who was a daughter of Julian Aulin Weir, the painter. He was so extravagant.

Riess: "Sara, dear, you first made me appreciate Whittier as the true poet of New England, not an imitation of old England, but in his benign Quakerish way original, as was that other Quaker, Walt Whitman." That's 1926.

Here is Sara: "Erskine, dearest, in exactly as true a sense as I am mother of this little book you are father of it, and to you the book, as well as my life and love, is wholly dedicated," Sara Bard Field, Christmas 1925.

Caldwell: This is my mother's "Vintage Festival." That's been terribly downgraded from a literary point of view as too sentimental. It makes me feel badly because I like it so much. It is about St. Helena.

Riess: Here is one: "To our darling daughter Katherine Field to celebrate the summer vacation and her coming to us. Binding from me, Charles Erskine Scott Wood, her Pops, book from her adorable, and adored mother, Sara Bard Field--see next page."

Caldwell: He was a great dedicator. I was always astounded at how anybody could think of some unusual thing to say.

Riess: Here is one: An Oscar Wilde, "The Happy Prince." Dedicated "To Charles Erskine Scott Wood, husband, comrade, critic, who has opened 'the new heaven and the new earth,' this precious relic of my childhood bound by his dear friend's daughter, and finally with his consent to be given to Kay, our daughter," Sara Bard Field, Christmas 1923.

Caldwell: You can see why I have these in a special case.

Riess: [Reading into tape recorder] Here is a book dedicated to "My dear boy, Albert Field Ehr Gott," Charles Erskine Scott Wood, June 20, 1917. And then, further, "My darling daughter Kay, no copy of my book I could give you would be so valuable as this one I gave to our beautiful winged Albert," Pops, July 20, 1920.

It is "A Mask of Love" by Charles Erskine Scott Wood published by Walter M. Hill, Chicago 1904.

And another, "Sonnets to Sappho." "Dedicated to the onlie begetter of these insuing sonnets, SBF, wife, lover, companion," C.E.S.W.

APPENDICES--Katherine Field Caldwell

- A. "Remembering the 1923 Fire," from Hillside Neighborhood Newsletter, 1992.

242
- B. "An American Patron, Albert Bender of San Francisco," by Katherine Field Caldwell, American Federation of Arts Magazine of Art, August 1938.

243
- C. "Guidebook to Sexy Sculpturing," by Ralph Craib, San Francisco Chronicle, June 26, 1964.

249
- D. "From Winckelmann to Warburg, Art History at Mills," by Mary Manning Wale, Mills Magazine, May-June 1972.

250
- E. "Farewell to Katherine Caldwell," by Nancy Thompson Price, Mills Quarterly, May 1971.

255
- F. "Afterword" by Katherine Field Caldwell, Sara Bard Field, Poet and Suffragist, The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, 1979.

256

REMEMBERING THE 1923 FIRE

by Katherine Caldwell

(in Options for Hillside, neighborhood newsletter, number two, September 1992)

The 1923 Berkeley fire swept down upon North Berkeley with the same sudden fury of the recent devastating Oakland-Berkeley blaze. It had been burning for two days in the Contra Costa hills, then barren of houses, ignored by the Berkeley fire department, which claimed that a fire in another county was not their responsibility. But inevitably it reached North Berkeley. Igniting a frame house on upper Buena Vista, above which were the dry, grassy slopes of the Berkeley hills, the fire spread rapidly to what is now the Hillside school area. The relentless north wind made kindling of the dry wooden shingles. Sparks flew from one house roof to another in an endless chain, and, since the water supply had given out early on, hosing down the roofs was impossible. The flames, however, were hidden by thick clouds of black smoke that obscured the closeness of the danger and the urgency of quick evacuation.

Everyone sensed the eventual destruction of his home but felt a state of paralysis when it came to making wise choices for salvaging his belongings. My father, appropriate to his duty as clergyman, gave help to distraught mothers who were frantically trying to round up their children and persuaded an elderly handicapped neighbor to be removed from her house (she steadfastly affirmed that God would protect her from the flames). For my own part, suddenly aware of the imminent danger, I grabbed my small wirehaired terrier and a beautifully bound set of Shakespeare and dragged a Chinese rug out of our threatened house. By this time scores of sightseers were driving along LeRoy Avenue, few, alas, offering help. However, a Catholic priest obligingly took the Shakespeare and the rug for safe-keeping. If only others had been as compassionate!

By this time our house had caught fire, and my father shouted to me to run to the car before it burned in the street. Hardly seated in the car, we saw our house, a three

story Berkeley redwood, consumed by flames like a box thrown into a bonfire. As we moved down the hill we saw burning cars as well as an occasional piano dragged into the open in a desperate attempt to save it from destruction.

There were many offers of hospitality in Berkeley, but I chose to go to San Francisco, where my mother lived on Russian Hill. I was sixteen and possessed a driver's license—routine for sixteen year olds today, but a rarity in 1923. I had parked my mother's car in a downtown garage and, needing gas, headed for a station. To my dismay, I discovered that in the excitement of escape I had left my purse in the 1553 LeRoy house! I explained to the station owner that my house, including purse, had just burned and asked if he would trust me for five gallons of gas. "Of course, lady," he said with reassuring emphasis, "I'll fill your tank!" When I reached the auto ferry I found the same generous response to my empty pockets. "Come right on board," the deckhand called out. And it was not until the boat had left shore and I looked back at the great stretch of houseless, blackened land still sending pillars of smoke into the sky that I realized the scope of the damage.

Before the 1923 fire the Hillside School area, as today, was a friendly place. The unifying focus of the neighborhood was a firehouse located at the southeast end of the present school building. The firemen were our dependable friends. They welcomed and amused children and would willingly bring a ladder to a second story window, crawl through the window, and admit a keyless owner into his house.

The desire for a unifying center prevails today, expressed in the efforts of Options for Hillside to retain the Hillside playground as a community asset. Even the effort to achieve this end strengthens neighborhood unification.

-----tear off-----

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VOLUME 31

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AUGUST, 1938

Maurice Sterne: "Seated Girl," Bali, 1914. Drawing *Cover*
In the Bender Collection, San Francisco Museum of Art

Edward Weston: Photograph of Albert Bender *Frontispiece*

An American Patron. By Katherine Field Caldwell 411
Albert Bender of San Francisco

Vachel Lindsay: Pen and Ink Symbolist. By Thelma Wiles Thaling . . . 450

Notes for a Study of Architecture. By Henry S. Churchill 457

Bloch and Nordfeldt: A Study in Contrasts. By Wallace S. Baldinger . . 458

Theatre and Geography. By Hallie Flanagan 464
The Federal Theatre Project's Present and Future

Circus and Ringside in the Lithographs of Robert Riggs. By Childe Reece 469

Industrial Design: A New Profession. By Eugene Schoen 472

Activity 480
News of Federation Chapters and the Several Arts

Letters 486

August Exhibitions 496
A National List

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PREVIOUS ISSUES LISTED IN "ART INDEX" AND "THE READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE"

AN AMERICAN PATRON

BY KATHERINE FIELD CALDWELL

IT IS an axiom in San Francisco that all art activities lead to Albert Bender's door. For a quarter of a century his eminence as a benefactor has been as familiar as the physical aspects of the city: its ferry tower, the jerking cable cars climbing perpendicular hills, the ocean grown more intimate in the narrow channel of the Golden Gate. Unlike the landmarks of the city, Mr. Bender has never been taken for granted. He has received official recognition in the form of honorary degrees from every important educational institution in the community and unofficial acclaim from the hundreds whom he has benefited and the many more who consider him a focus of the culture of his city. Mr. Bender's generosity has won him devoted love and admiration—it has even given him a somewhat legendary reputation. But its deeper social import, the mass effect of his giving, has been obscured by concentration on individual instances of it. There is a growing awareness that the bestowing of gifts, however commendable in itself, is the smallest part of his significance. From his steady outpouring of gifts definite principles become discernible which prove him to be a unique national force in the world of art.

Mr. Bender believes that the best way to further art is to support living artists, especially those near at hand. He does not imply that the art produced today is the only and the final beauty. On the contrary he considers historical collections of great importance. But he fears that too great concern over preserving the past might cause the death of contemporary art. He recognizes that the artist has something valuable to contribute to contemporary life and is entitled to earn a living by means of his art. This may seem at first glance an accepted commonplace. But if it is, society has been slow to act upon it. On the whole, artists have been treated as though they were erratic children, or visionary and incompetent ones, leaning on their "stronger" brothers in trade. Mr. Bender's distinction lies in acting upon his belief in the importance of contemporary artists and their right to live by their art. He does not await a Golden Age; he helps to bring it about.

Long before the government acknowledged the legitimate claim of the artist to eat by his brush or pen, San Francisco artists knew that they could rely upon Mr. Bender to support them in this claim. The needs that his tireless understanding and bounty have supplied are varied: the raw materials them-



The Anne Bremer Memorial Library founded by Albert Bender in 1935 at the California School of Fine Arts. The relief over the mantel is by Jacques Schnier; the three lunettes showing most clearly contain frescoes by Victor Arnautoff. Both artists work in California

selves—paint, canvas, clay, a place to work; support through illness, opportunity to study glazes in Korea, for example, or to see the galleries of Europe and America. Wherever possible this help has been proffered by the purchase of products, rarely by the humiliation of outright gift. And this resolve to preserve the artist's integrity is looked upon by artists themselves as an important part of Mr. Bender's distinctive style of patronage.

The proportion of his gifts to his income is no less remarkable than Mr. Bender's active appreciation of living artists. It is the astonishing fact that ninety per cent of Mr. Bender's income goes back to the community's charitable, educational and creative ventures. His own personal wants are very simple; once they are supplied he gives everything he has away. For a man who has achieved outstanding success in business, who has collected thousands of objects from ancient Japanese pottery to contemporary Mexican painting, Mr. Bender is singularly unattached to material things. Once an object passes into his hands he is not content until it becomes the possession of an institution where it may be enjoyed in common. An object may truly be said not to be his until it has come into the keeping of another.

The Far West had special need of a man to whom gold was not a final good. It is natural that California should cherish its

frontier tradition, especially its romantic gold-rush past. This past is not very remote and the frontier tradition coincides with our American love for physical accomplishments on a large scale. There is a lingering feeling that we must "push on" to bigger buildings, highways, bridges. In the face of this concentration on physical achievement the arts had particular need of encouragement. Albert Bender realized that there were frontiers of the spirit to be cultivated as well as those of the land. In a tribute to his friend Senator Pbelan, Mr. Bender ascribed to him the "vision of a future in which appreciation of the Fine Arts is to keep pace with material prosperity." There could be no clearer statement of his own self-imposed responsibility.

Certain strong influences shaped this theory of patronage. For one, a clerical father, learned in the Irish poets as well as in theology. But even more important was the companionship over a long period of years with his talented cousin, Anne Bremer, to whom, as Mr. Bender wrote, "... a world without art was a barren place from which the soul of man had departed." Association with a painter who not only knew but saw was a rare opportunity for education in the arts. His interest in Mills College was a tribute to her as a person and to the education of women in general. In this oldest college for women in the Far West, he finds and fosters a broad concep-



Karl Hofer's "The Card Players" in the Bender Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Art. This is but one of many gifts



"Requiem," lithograph by José Clemente Orozco, in the Bender Collection at the San Francisco Museum of Art

tion of culture which accepts the arts as an essential part of a balanced education. But Mr. Bender's temperament does not espouse causes or crusades. The aura he creates around him is harmonious, genial. He acts habitually to meet a need in a given situation and it is from the total sum of these acts that a principle emerges.

The Bender room in the Mills College library concentrates chiefly upon modern literature and fine printing. For continuity and contrast some older items are included. There is a manuscript of Elizabeth Browning, a letter in Dickens' hand, an early edition of Burns. In fine printing every important press from Kelmscott to Gribhorn is represented and in California there are manuscripts from Bret Harte to Robinson Jeffers. Mr. Bender's enthusiasm for literature and fine printing fills the shelves of the Stanford and University of California libraries as well.

His name runs through the pamphlets called "Gifts to the Regents of the University of California" like the dominant thread in a patterned cloth. It is easy to infer his ready acquiescence to each need suggested to him. Between the years 1926 and 1938 there are recorded items like these: a donation "to defray expenses of exhibiting a group of twenty-five representative landscape painters of California; also to the art department to purchase three portfolios of reproductions of drawings by Leonardo da Vinci, Holbein and Watteau;" a sum of money "to a professor of art to purchase art materials during a visit to Japan, for the University of California art museum, for the establishment of a poetry prize, for the purchase of one

hundred and fifty original drawings by G. K. Chesterton, for one of Hilaire Belloc's books, for the purchase of Russian ikons, for the purchase of material to be used in setting a mural on the wall of the art gallery, eighteen pieces of Guatemalan textiles representing various weaves."

Although Mr. Bender's interest cannot be narrowed into one channel the trend of his giving identifies him especially with artists. Among his most notable gifts are the memorial funds established at the California School of Fine Arts; one for talented and impecunious students, another for the library. The inspiration of Anne Bremer was again determinate. She had studied at the School before going to Paris, graduating with the highest honors. In founding the Anne Bremer Memorial Fund for deserving students, Mr. Bender won many new friends for art in San Francisco by persuading others to add to the substantial sum that he himself set aside. On repeated occasions he has formed "clusters" of art patrons. No one can refuse him because of his evident disinterestedness and unreserved giving. A punning friend remarked after contributing to one of his projects "Albert Bender is the dearest friend I have."

With a group of friends Mr. Bender answered the pressing need of the School by founding the Anne Bremer Library. Since the library is for the use of practicing students books are chosen primarily from the standpoint of technique and excellence of reproduction. In order that the library might have some fresher link with contemporary art than textbook illustration, Mr. Bender commissioned Victor Arnautoff, Ralph

William Gust, a native San Franciscan, painted "White Chrysanthemums," now in the Bender Collection at the San Francisco Museum of Art. Mr. Bender's chief interest is in the artists of his own city and his own region



"Two Women and a Child" (1926), encaustic painting by Diego Rivera. Bender Collection. California Palace of the Legion of Honor



Stackpole, Ray Boynton, William Hesthal, Gordon Langdon and Fred Olmstead—all San Francisco artists—to paint frescoes in the lunettes below the ceiling. Over the fireplace a plaque by Jacques Schnier bears the inscription of the date of the formal dedication of the library.

Although Mr. Bender's gifts to the San Francisco Art Association were already generous—scholarships, library and books—Mr. Bender also gave a series of drawings of hands by Diego Rivera. His interest in Rivera goes back to 1929 when a group of San Francisco artists returned from Mexico with the news of a flourishing art renaissance. Mr. Bender was favorably disposed from the first towards a man whose influence on the methods and subject matter of contemporary artists was so profound. Months before Rivera's fame spread like a fever across the country Mr. Bender bought his oils and drawings. He was one of the first laymen in America to appreciate Rivera and give him enthusiastic support during his stay in San Francisco.

When the first one-man show of Rivera's work was held at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco in 1930, Mr. Bender supplied a number of the items from his

own collection. Some of these remained as permanent gifts to the Museum.

Besides contemporary paintings, European textiles, prints and sculptures, Mr. Bender has given the California Palace of the Legion of Honor and the De Young Memorial Museum a number of Oriental objects. Outstanding among these is a group of Han mortuary figures and a distinguished group of prehistoric Japanese pottery including Minu, Yamato and Yayoi types. His interest in Oriental culture derives from the early days of his career in San Francisco when he won not only the business but the friendship of the Chinese population.

Mr. Bender combines fidelity to familiar ventures with zest for new ones. His enthusiasm, once engaged, may be counted upon to be permanent. Yet he is none the less eager to encourage new growth. When the San Francisco Museum of Art opened in 1935 Albert Bender welcomed a gallery devoted expressly to exhibiting and explaining contemporary art. Nothing supplemented more completely his long patronage of artists than a gallery for the interchange of ideas between artist and public. For whatever his philosophical persuasion, the artist does not work to decorate his own studio walls.

During the three years of the existence of the San Francisco Museum of Art, Mr. Bender has given scores of objects to the

Museum's permanent collection, provided the means for purchase funds, and kept himself available for the frequent emergencies that arise in the life of a new institution. Works by western artists, especially of those in and near San Francisco, form the nucleus of the Bender Collection. To the California group, however, Mr. Bender has added many others. Maurice Sterne (an adopted San Franciscan) is represented by a number of drawings from 1910 to the present day, and by two canvases: *Sleeping Girl* and *Praying Girl in the Ganges*. The Mexican group includes *The Flower Vendor*, painted by Rivera at the request of Albert Bender, Martinez, Montenegro, Charlot and Merida. There are excellent examples of the work of Alexander Brook, Edward Bruce, Boris Deutsch and of Karl Hofer. Beside containing every well known American name, the print collection includes Cézanne, Gauguin, Pissarro, Renoir, Matisse, Picasso and Brouet.

Although Mr. Bender is manifestly concerned with the accumulation of things of worth, he has never looked upon the acquiring of works of art as his essential purpose. There is a deeper impulse motivating all he so tirelessly does—his devotion to the living artist, his almost complete dedication of his income to buying and giving. By his own word, Mr. Bender collects not art, but human beings.

Prehistoric Japanese Pottery, "Yayoi" type. In the Bender Collection of the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco



San Francisco Chronicle, 6/26/64

KATHERINE CALDWELL

An art lecturer

Guidebook To Sexy Sculpturing

By Ralph Craib

That summer session course on the history and appreciation of art—San Francisco's obscene statue trial—proceeded to the consideration of some crumbling ancient Indian temples and age-old Indian philosophies yesterday.

And the jurors learned that the Kama Sutra, the inspiration of the controversial statuary, is "to the Indians, say, what a medical book on ideal family life would be in our own culture."

The definition came from Katherine Caldwell, Mills College lecturer on Oriental art.

Mrs. Caldwell, a sprightly little sparrow of a woman, was called as a defense witness for Michael Muldoon Elder, 24, and Michael Stafford, 24, charged with obscenity because they offered for sale some works of sculptor Ron Boise.

Boise, a shaggily-bearded individualist, works with '50 and '51 Ford fenders and bumpers, among other things, to create busts and figures. What some of the figures are doing upset the police and prompted the arrests.

His inspiration, the Kama Sutra, and temples depicting its writings, emerged in Mrs. Caldwell's testimony as sort of massive compendiums of the seemingly endless ways in which two people can share intimacies, a how-to-do-it physicaliology text.

Preceding Mrs. Caldwell to the stand was Professor Walter Horn, University of California art historian, who was engaged by Deputy District Attorney Luther Goodwin in lengthy interrogation intended to answer one of man's age-old questions: What is art?

Professor and prosecutor reached no conclusions.

GOOD

But Dr. Horn did pronounce Boise's male and female figures to be art and very good art indeed. "Gentle and warm and done in great sympathy and tenderness," he said.

Artist Boise's elation at the testimony was short-lived. Two arms grabbed his at the end of the court day and he was hustled up to the city prison for failing to take care of a \$28 ticket for having a defective windshield.

The art trial continues today.

Jim was on the ACLU Board, and when the case came up he suggested that I, as an art historian, should be one of the witnesses for the defense. The situation was that the City of San Francisco police department arrested the gallery owner, showing the sculptures [inspired by the Kama Sutra], on charges of obscenity. On my day in court I brought photographs for the public and jurors to see, of art of a sexual nature. And Professor Walter Horn, another of the witnesses, explained how important the depiction of love in art is. I remember five women on the jury wore dark glasses, in this rather dim courtroom, to avoid being seen to look directly at the sculpture. Really, it was all quite a sensation at the time, and the Chronicle had it on the front page. In fact, they said if you wanted a free course in art history you should attend the trial! The outcome was a complete victory for the artist, and the gallery owner. But I was very nervous about testifying, and I remember Walter Horn treated me to a filet mignon beforehand, I suppose to strengthen me or something. The third witness, I have forgotten his name, but I know that Thomas Carr Howe refused to be a witness because he said he felt it would offend his trustees! I also remember that beforehand, after I read the Kama Sutra, because I didn't know that much about Indian art I went to consult with a professor at Cal who explained what the Kama Sutra meant in its day. [KFC]

from WINCKELMANN *to* WARBURG: ART HISTORY AT MILLS

by Mary Manning Wale

Thirty-five years ago, wishing to pursue on the graduate level my interest in art history, I enrolled in a Summer Session program at Mills. Dr. Neumeyer was collaborating with William Suhr of the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts on a study of the techniques of painting, and the material covered ranged from the methods used by the ancients to those employed by Titian during his long lifetime. It was the stimulation and fascination of that summer's study which led me to work for my Master's degree at Mills.

Newly come to the West Coast, I had visited the University of California and found to my disappointment that the discipline of art history as I had known it at Wellesley was missing. At that time courses in art appreciation and aesthetics were the closest approach to the subject in which I had received my B.A. At Mills, however, an orderly sequence of courses in both Oriental and European art was available; graduate seminars, a course in museum training, and work on a Master's thesis were offered. The materials were what I wanted, and the approach was the one with which I was familiar. How did this situation occur at Mills, a small Western college for women?

First, perhaps, because it was a bit of transplanted New England. On studying the early catalogues, one finds a long tradition of art history as part of the curriculum, dating back to 1875, and listed as a requirement for graduation until 1916. The influence here, one ventures to guess, is through Mt. Holyoke, Alma Mater of Mrs. Mills, and supplier of a succession of teachers for Mills.

In 1874 the first lectures in art were given at Mt. Holyoke. Standard courses in art history were developed as time went on, with the subject a required one for seniors. Mt. Holyoke thus seemed to be following the pattern of the other Eastern colleges building up solid programs in this area. Their guiding light was Germany where the first chair in art history had been established thirty years earlier for G. F. Waagen.

A second factor was the vision of Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, dynamic president of Mills

from 1916 to 1943. In the 1930's and early 40's she seized the opportunity of bringing to the College refugee scholars who shed a new lustre on the institution. Alfred Salmony, Alfred Neumeyer, Edgar Breitenbach, and Otto Maenchen, maintaining European standards of scholarship, incorporated into their courses fresh material, frequently the result of their own researches.

They came, however, to a soil well prepared, and to a congenial atmosphere. The modern sophisticate is quite ready to smile condescendingly over the catalogues of the Seminary and young College. The ladies entrusted with the teaching of art history also doubled as English instructors; one is rightfully dubious concerning the depths of their knowledge. But—the eye pauses—what is this? We scan a catalogue listing the textbooks used in art history and find that they are the standard works of the time, written by the leading authorities of the period, Kugler, Lübke, Winckelmann (generally thought of as the father of art history), Crowe and Cavacaselle. Their books were the best offered then, and later discoveries concerning dating and attributions should not obscure our recognition of the contributions made by these men. Just how the courses at Mills were taught or the general tone is not so important as the fact that this branch of study was formally recognized. Its

Pictures:

Don W. Jones, page 3, right; page 5, upper left; back cover. Roi Partridge, page 4, left. Imogen Cunningham, page 4, right. Kenneth Young, page 5, upper right and bottom; page 6. ASUCLA Photographic Department, page 9, bottom; page 10, bottom. Harasty Photography, page 9, top.

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*Mr. Maenchen**Mr. Partridge**Mr. Salmony*

He also taught a two-unit course in the "General History of Art," which was very general indeed. More depth, presumably, was to be found in two upper division courses entitled "Schools of Painting" and "American Painting."

The year 1920 saw still deeper emphasis given to the artist's rather than to the historian's point of view when the distinguished etcher Roi Partridge was appointed. He was to serve Mills long and faithfully. Mr. Partridge shared with Mr. Neuhaus and Mrs. Grace Storey Putnam responsibility for the advanced courses mentioned above. This was in addition to his primary commitment, teaching studio courses.

Another development important for the stature of the College was the fact that Mills was now accredited as a teacher training institution and it was possible to obtain the State Certificate in Drawing and Art for Secondary Schools. Certain theoretical and practical courses were required by the State Board of Education; the curriculum of the art department was influenced accordingly.

The 1923-24 catalogue lists the name of Miss Florence Minard, long known for her courses on the history of costume and on domestic architecture and furnishings. These were tied in with the burgeoning Department of Home Economics. In 1928 Eugen Neuhaus was no longer at Mills; more formal courses in art history, including one on Oriental art were offered by Dr. Anna Cox Brinton and Mrs. Rose Berry.

In 1931 Warren Cheney of the University of California began teaching a course in modern art, described as a unified approach to the major arts. Painting, literature, and theater were discussed in the fall semester; sculpture, dance, architecture, and music in the spring. The course was offered through 1936.

Significant change took place in 1934 with

the appointment of Alfred Salmony (Ph.D., Vienna) as visiting lecturer in Oriental art. He taught courses on prehistoric art in China, on the Eastern animal style, and on the Scythians, his areas of special interest and research, in addition to the general course on Oriental art already in the curriculum.

Although Salmony's stay at Mills was relatively brief his imprint as a scholar lingered. Three Master's theses on Oriental art had been produced while he was at Mills. One was by Elizabeth Huff, who became a distinguished Orientalist and later director of the East Asiatic Library in Berkeley, one by Helen Chapin, already an Oriental scholar in her own right, and one by Alice Putnam Breuer (now Mrs. Erskine) who had undertaken study abroad in connection with her thesis. Following Dr. Salmony's departure she was given the post of instructor in Oriental art and conscientiously followed his methods of teaching.

Also still vivid in the collective memory were two exhibitions of Chinese and Japanese art which drew considerable attention to Mills. At the same time, chiefly through the Rockefeller Foundation, valuable and expensive sets of books on Oriental art were obtained.

Dr. Salmony left in 1936, ultimately for a connection with New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, where he remained until his death in 1958.

The appointment in 1935 of Alfred Neumeier (Ph.D., Berlin) as Assistant Professor of Art and Director of the Art Gallery was a milestone in the College's history. For thirty-one years he was a guiding force in the art department and brought Mills much in the way of reflected glory. A scholar rigorously trained in the European tradition, a gifted lecturer and writer, always with two or three pieces of re-



Miss Tolman

effects on those sensitive to beauty cannot be measured.

From existing records there seems to be general agreement on the role played by Jane Cordelia Tolman, younger sister of Mrs. Mills. Also a graduate of Mt. Holyoke, she is first listed as an English teacher, for the period 1868-77. Then she disappears from the catalogue and reappears in 1882 as a full-fledged instructor in art history, teaching the subject until her retirement in 1903. At the same time the catalogue proudly announces that as an adjunct to the program in that field there are "hundreds of fine engravings and autotypes, recently selected for the Seminary in Europe." This is our clue to the date of Miss Tolman's visit to that Mecca for American art lovers. Apparently it was the great experience of her life. Also, apparently, she had the ability to transmit her feeling for art. Rosalind Keep in her history of Mills says that former students of Miss Tolman's referred to art history as one of the most valuable, vital, and stimulating subjects in the curriculum.

Jane Tolman was succeeded by Augusta Brooks, who taught both English and art history from 1904 to 1911, and by Marian Griswold Boalt, a graduate of Lake Erie College, who had also studied at Mt. Holyoke. Miss Brooks had done graduate work at Wellesley, but whether in English or art history we do not know. Miss Boalt's appointment was made during the presidency of Louella Clay Carson, who was trying to raise Mills from seminary to College standards.

After 1916, following the inauguration of Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, many changes took place. New appointees brought a higher degree of scholarship to the campus, with the number holding the Ph.D. increasing appreciably; the curriculum was expanded and up-dated, and the College gained national recognition. The reputation developed during the first decade of Dr. Reinhardt's presidency was due in large part to her personality and ability. In 1917 Mills was elected to membership in the Association of American Universities and Colleges. A charter for a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa was granted in 1928.

The art department perforce reflected this period of growth and changing emphases. In 1918 Miss Boalt was replaced by the noted painter Eugen Neuhaus. He was given the title "Director of Graphic and Applied Art" and offered lecture courses on "the principles of artistic production and aesthetic appreciation."

Mr. Neumeyer





Mrs. Caldwell



Mr. Frankenstein

search in hand, he quickly built up a reputation as an outstanding teacher. After his retirement his lecture series for alumnae drew flocks of former students wishing to renew the old magic, and many others, happy to have the opportunity of hearing the master whose courses they had missed as undergraduates.

Dr. Neumeyer thought of the Art Gallery as an adjunct to the teaching function; consequently exhibits were chosen with an eye to enriching the course offerings. In making acquisitions for the Gallery he concentrated on purchasing prints. There were several reasons—one was Dr. Neumeyer's special interest and competence in this area because of his experience in the Print Room at the Berlin Museum, another was the fact that graphic works were relatively inexpensive, and a third was that this material provided students with the experience of handling original works of art. Woodcuts, engravings, and etchings were used to good advantage in advanced courses and seminars.

A true scholar has an insatiable desire for books; Dr. Neumeyer's efforts to obtain for the Library important works resulted in a collection of volumes on art history unusually fine for a college of this size. His interest extended to items for the rare book room, where sources for art history and finely illustrated books were acquired on his recommendation. These, in turn, were used in special seminars held in the Bender Room.

In 1937 despite the Depression and gathering war clouds the department's little band of graduate students had a sense of excitement and of larger possibilities. Edgar Breitenbach (Ph.D., Hamburg), disciple of Aby Warburg who founded the famous institute which still bears his name, gave special courses in medieval art and iconography. A year-long seminar on

Michelangelo conducted by Dr. Neumeyer made us feel that we were authorities on that particular titan and the following year devoted to Dürer gave us insight into the Northern genius and knowledge of the graphic art of that time and place.

Pearl Harbor, alas, brought drastic reverses to the College. President Reinhardt, fearful of the effect of war on enrollment, made large cuts in staff. Dr. Neumeyer and Miss Minard alone were left to teach European art. Otto Maenchen (Ph.D., Leipzig), who came to Mills in 1939, continued to conduct courses in Oriental art. After Miss Minard's retirement in 1945 until Robert Beetem's appointment in 1961 Dr. Neumeyer was solely responsible for the area of Western art. This would have been detrimental to the College had he been a lesser man. As it was, courses covering different periods had to be offered in alternate years, and it was difficult to give graduate students work sufficiently advanced and varied.

Beginning in 1944 Alfred Frankenstein's popular and valuable course on music and the visual arts in America started under the auspices

Mrs. Corn, Mr. Wass, Mrs. Wright



of the School of Fine Arts. This, with a break between 1947 and 1955, has continued to the

Mrs. Wale, Associate Librarian and Lecturer in History of Art, also has charge of the Albert M. Bender Collection of rare books and manuscripts. She is a graduate of Wellesley College, with an M.A. from Mills and the Certificate in Librarianship from the University of California at Berkeley. She has been at Mills since 1941. As the librarian concerned with the proper presentation of theses, she regrets that this magazine omits footnotes and suggests the following references in addition to the Mills sources cited.

Priscilla Hiss and Roberta Fansler, *Research in Fine Arts in the Colleges and Universities of the United States* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1934), pp. 115-116.

"Historiography" in the *Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1959).

"Kunstgeschichte American Style," by Colin Eisler in *The Intellectual Migration, Europe to America, 1930-1960*, ed. by Donald Fleming (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 544-629.



present time, with some modifications. The section on visual arts is now a separate course listed under the art department.

A happy circumstance for the College was the 1951 appointment of Katherine Caldwell as lecturer in Oriental art after interim appointments following Dr. Maenchen's departure for U. C. in 1947. She was destined to bring twenty years of enthusiastic teaching to Mills students. Upon her retirement last June, Hugh Wass was appointed to teach the courses in this area.

Today a new generation has taken over, bright, energetic young people, excellently trained. Since 1961 the directorship of the Gallery has been successively in the hands of Robert Beetem, Carl Belz, and Elizabeth Elston Ross, a Mills alumna. Following Dr. Neumeyer's retirement in 1966 Hanna Lerski and, subsequently, Georgia Wright took responsibility for his courses. Today's students are keenly interested in contemporary art and the courses on this subject offered first by Carl Belz and currently by Wanda Corn have been enthusiastically received.

Graduate work in art history has been dropped within the past few years because of the limitations of the department—in size of staff rather than quality. Over the years the relationship with offerings in the creative arts has on the whole been well balanced, with majors obliged to take courses in both history and technique.

What of the students who majored in art history or earned Master's degrees in the subject? A few have gone on to get the Ph.D. and pursue careers commensurate with their ability. Others have led useful lives, teaching on different levels, as museum and gallery workers or as librarians. In my case I found the possibility of a happy marriage between art history and the study of rare books. The two fields are closely related and enhance each other.

The students who have not followed professions contribute also. Some participate in docent programs in museums, and others with wealth at their disposal have played important roles as patrons of art.

At the present moment there is tremendous popular interest in art. We find increasing numbers of art history programs in colleges, junior colleges, and high schools. Here at Mills the subject is flourishing, nearly one hundred years after its introduction into the curriculum.

Farewell to Katherine Caldwell

Nancy Thompson Price, '61

Quarterly custom is to honor a retiring faculty member by asking a faculty associate or former student to write a piece about him or her. Nancy Thompson Price, a former student of Dr. Caldwell's, now teaches Oriental art history at Vassar.

When Katherine Caldwell came to the campus she was not the first to teach Oriental art at Mills. She did, however, provide the only contact with Asian culture for several generations of art majors and other assorted students inclined toward exotica. Her survey confronted the novice with a plethora of unheard-of names and places, not to mention times. There was no familiar Renaissance or Renoir to reassure the student, now called upon for the first time to cope with the *stupa* and the *sutra*, Wangs and Yangs, Kano Masanobu and Kano Mitsunobu. But Mrs. Caldwell's own obvious enthusiasm for, and sure command of her subject matter invariably carried her class through the first few dazed weeks. Her lectures brought the myterious East to life with an effective selection from the stunning collection of slides which she had made on her various trips. Her personal library of Chinese and Japanese publications, too, was available to her students. By the end of the year's course, their horizons had been expanded far beyond their own Western heritage. For those whose initial curiosity developed into a deep interest, she provided advanced courses in Chinese and Japanese art.

As a strong believer in the principle that Asian culture should be part of the curriculum of all college students, and as sole representative of Asian studies at Mills for many years, Mrs. Caldwell can, at her retirement, draw satisfaction from the presently some-

Appendix E

what more developed program in the area. Offerings in history and opportunities for language study now augment the courses in art history which she taught for two decades.

Mrs. Caldwell received her BA and MA from Radcliffe College, where she studied under the renowned American pioneer in the field of Oriental art history, Landgon Warner. She made frequent research trips abroad, traveling extensively in Europe, India and Japan to visit museums and art centers and to examine the art treasures preserved in private collections. She is currently at work on a special research project involving Japanese painting, and to further this project went to Japan in the summer of 1968 on a Mills College research grant.



Through her travels, lectures and teaching Mrs. Caldwell has done much to advance interest in Oriental culture in the Bay Area. One of the founders and a former director of the Society for Asian Art in San Francisco, she is presently on their advisory committee, composed of specialists in the field from Bay Area colleges and universities. She served on the committee for the opening of the Avery Brundage Wing of the M. H. De Young Museum in San Francisco, in June, 1966. Illustrated records of findings on her trips have greatly enriched the slide collection of the Mills College Department of Art.

Mrs. Caldwell's retirement marks the beginning of a more intensive pursuit of her own special academic interests. She will leave this summer on another trip to Japan, where she plans to spend several months studying Nara paintings. Mills will miss her, but we wish her well in her new ventures.

AFTERWORD

From the oral history of Sara Bard Field,
by Catherine Caldwell, 1979.

Children usually piece together the events of their parents' lives gradually, in no logical sequence, from partially remembered anecdotes, casually mentioned, or deliberately related events.. My mother's autobiography confirms what I sensed from early childhood, that she belonged to a world reaching far beyond our home. Just how large that world was and the genesis and expansion of her concern is set down in her oral history with clarity and astonishingly remembered detail. While we could not, as children, appreciate the importance of her work, my brother and I accepted her role in the outside world as a given fact--although not without dismay. For since she was capable of creating intense, joyous excitement, her frequent absences were the more bleak by contrast. The infectious gaiety she brought with her was felt by everyone whose life she touched. My husband, James Caldwell, expressed the sparkle she inevitably evoked by saying, "When Sara comes, it's always a holiday!". She had the gift of giving herself wholly to the moment, not only in gaiety, but in sympathetic concern for individual suffering, always offering help, and for passionate defense of a cause or principle.

Companionship with her was for my brother and me a shining event, after her long absences on the suffrage trail. We entered into the games she devised for us with much laughter and the sense that she was, for the moment, "ours." We were particularly enchanted by her "old witch," an imaginary alter ego which she pretended to consult with mischievous and conspiratorial secrecy when we asked her a question. She was indeed bewitching in the dictionary definition, as in "a particularly charming and alluring woman."

Sharing her was taken for granted, but however long the absences, it never occurred to me that she would not want to return home. And so it was an unexpected and paralyzing shock when she announced suddenly that she was no longer going to share life with my father. I was in my sixth year when she came to me suddenly and said, "Darling, I'm going to leave your father, do you want to stay with him or come with me?". I could not believe her words, for I hadn't the faintest hint that so momentous a change was about to take place. Besides my ignorance of the rift between my parents I had never encountered separation between parents. None of my little friends' parents were divorced. To choose between two parents, both of whom I loved, was a terrible decision. Forced to a choice, I chose to go with my mother. My brother, whom I dearly loved and who adored my mother, stayed behind.

We were to spend a year in Goldfield, Nevada while my mother sued for her divorce. Coming from the land of rose festivals and verdant gardens we found this dry bare country a considerable shock. Even the guide books comment on its aridity. Desert Challenge describes it best: "Goldfield was a waterless and treeless country, in a zone where even the sagebrush gave up

trying to grow, in favor of the low shad scale and the giant yucca, which cast no more shade than a barbwire fence." There was one little oasis in the town, - a small plot of grass owned by a highly paid mine executive. We were told that the monthly water bill for this extravagance came to one hundred dollars! I used to gaze on it with wonder, touching the green blades remembering my father's pride in our Portland garden and the smell of the newly cut lawn. This bit of green was a comforting sight in a dry land.

It was not until some time after we were settled in a little house in that rough mining town that I sensed a new strong presence in our lives, tangible only through the flow of letters and telegrams and the frequent arrival, by freight, of edible delicacies. The sender, of course, was C.E.S.W. Visits to the telegraph and post office (there was no house delivery and I do not remember having a telephone) were a regular part of our lives. My mother used to say, when she took me with her, that the rowdy men about town respected a woman with a child. The telegraph clerk apparently broke his routine day by savoring the messages he recorded. But the telegrams my mother received baffled as well as amused him, for they sounded like meaningless gibberish. This was exactly the effect that they were supposed to have on the unknowing eye since the text was devised in a curious code, deliberately intended to disguise the meaning, and the identity of the sender. The sender was a mystery to me, too. I knew his name was Erskine (later to be called "Pops" by my brother and me) and that steady communication with him was the focus of my mother's life. But I did not then know that she had left my father for love of him. Nor did I know that later, after a long period of rejection by me, he would become a second father to me and a crucial force in shaping my thought and the direction of my life.

Erskine's letters were written in green ink in an easy flowing hand. The green ink was as much a part of his personal style as his long hair and beard. Sight of that ink and hand, when inadvertently discovered by my father in later years, would send him into a rage. For this small evidence of non-conformity reminded my father of C.E.S.W.'s deeper commitment to a personal freedom he abhorred.

My mother spent many hours at her typewriter, writing late into the night. I would lie in bed listening to the pounding of the keys which reassured me that she was "still there." When the sound ceased I was fearful of being left alone. For frequently, her work concluded, she would join a late-night party. Characteristically, she was the vibrant center of a group wherever she might be. Goldfield was no exception. Literate company was scarce, but executives of the gold mine provided tolerable distraction and temporary escape from her loneliness for C.E.S.W.

On Sundays, we dined at the Goldfield Hotel, the only evidence of urban elegance and solidity in town. I loved going there. There were thick flowered carpets, heavy leather-covered chairs, mahogany woodwork, and an elevator I delighted to ride up and down in just as a game. We would sit alone at a table in the big dining room. Mother would order a glass of red

wine for herself and a glass of grape juice for me, my "pretend wine," to make me feel grown up. On one occasion a lady at a nearby table admonished my mother for giving what she supposed to be alcohol to a child. My mother indignantly put her to rights.

Goldfield was undeniably a frontier town. Gypsies in horse-drawn wagons frequently came by, a bull occasionally broke loose, and my schoolmates included the offspring of prostitutes. But the serious threat to our peace of mind was blackmail. My mother would find a note under the door threatening her with damaging evidence in her divorce trial if she did not leave five hundred dollars (big money at that time) under a given tree. I remember going for a ride one night with some of my mother's friends to put an empty envelope under the designated tree. The sheriff was in hiding. Whether or not the criminal was caught I do not know, but I do know that the money was never paid.

The long year's exile in Goldfield came to an end. The terms of the divorce settlement gave custody of the children to my father. My brother, who had stayed behind with our father, had of course been separated from our mother for the duration. Henceforth, by court decree, we were to see my mother weekends and half of vacations. After an interval in Alameda, my father found a house for us in Berkeley, one he exchanged for the abandoned Portland property. He chose Berkeley because he wanted us to grow up in a cultivated academic community. My mother rented an apartment on Russian Hill in San Francisco, in commuting distance from Berkeley. On Fridays, in addition to our brown-bag lunch, we carried a little satchel to school for our weekend stay in San Francisco.

By my father's order, we were never to see "that man" (my father could never bring himself to utter the name of Wood). This stipulation put my mother in a serious dilemma. For how could she say to Erskine when he came down from Portland to see her (as he frequently did) "Erskine, please go away for the weekend since my children are here." So, in order to see my mother, we had to pretend to my father that we never saw "that man." I dreaded C.E.S.W.'s visits which cut into the precious hours with my mother and necessitated lying to my father. There were occasional leaks when some friend, innocent of betrayal, would say in my father's presence "I saw Albert and Kay having lunch at the Palace with the most interesting looking man. He had long hair and a beard." My father's rage on learning that his orders had been breached, that his children were being exposed to the views of an "anarchist" and "free lover," was terrifying. He renewed his threats to forbid our seeing our mother entirely.

On October 12, 1918, my brother Albert was killed in an automobile accident, when he was seventeen, I twelve. I have lived and relived the sequence of events of that tragic day throughout my life. My mother, brother, Pops, and I had been, as my mother describes, on a picnic in Marin county. Pops had never learned to drive, but had persuaded my mother to take driving lessons and she was, consequently, driving the car. We had

intended to go straight back to San Francisco after the picnic, since the auto ferries ran at fairly long intervals. However, my brother wanted to show my mother one of his favorite hiking haunts, and we drove farther on climbing a steep hill, called White's Hill. My brother and I took turns sitting beside my mother on the front seat. Shortly before the accident I moved in front. Since the hill seemed to continue indefinitely without a convenient turning place, my mother attempted to make a U-turn in the road. She put the gear in reverse and we moved slowly back. Suddenly we realized that she was approaching the outside edge of the road. Pops called out, "Sara, put on the brake!" which she did. But it was too late. The edge gave way and the car rolled slowly, turning over and over the forty-foot bank. My mother, brother and I were trapped under the overturned car at the bottom of the canyon. Only C.E.S.W. was thrown free. His nose had been broken, but, dripping with blood he climbed the steep bank to seek help. My mother, who must have been in excruciating pain from a partially severed leg, showed extraordinary fortitude. Though held down by my right arm, I was uninjured. My mother and I shouted "Help!" in unison, hoping to attract the attention of motorists on the highway above. It was a futile effort since on the upward slope engines noisily changed gears, obliterating other sounds. To the terror of being trapped was added the sound of my brother's heavy breathing. I did not know he was dying but knew he must be in great distress. In actuality he was killed by the weight of the car on his chest. According to my mother's account, she was "able to hold Kay in my arms and sing to her, trying to quiet her hysterical terror." This was an impossibility since we were separated and unable to move. For what she did do I am unendingly grateful. Although I realized our peril and would have put little faith in a soothing answer, I asked her if we were going to die. So, when she replied, "Kay, I do not know " the stark honesty was strangely reassuring.

My brother died under the car. We, the survivors, struggled with our disbelief. My mother's physical and psychological anguish were so great that she could not speak to me when I came to her hospital bed. Pops was under sedation. My brother was irretrievably gone. My father, who was out of town on a fund-raising trip for his church, was summoned but had not returned. I dreaded his coming for the accident not only killed my brother but also revealed undeniably our association with "that man." In my desolate isolation I was forced to a self-dependence both bewildering and awesome. It is impossible to exaggerate what the loss of my brother meant to me. For added to the weight of sorrow was the loss of a confident buoyant reassuring ever-present companion on whom I could depend. My mother seemed unaware of the immensity of this loss to me. She says in her oral history "Kay...was very young, and thank God, it doesn't seem to have left any mark on her that I can see. She never refers to it" (p.378). The familial bond between brother and sister was strengthened by separation from our mother and by our common need to stand up to our father's attempt to curtail our visits to her and to devise ways to slip in surreptitious visits. Although we each had separate friends, the weekend trips to San Francisco threw us together in our free time more constantly than most siblings of different ages and sexes.

Furthermore, the endearing reason for these trips bound us together in a special way. In spite of brotherly teasing, Albert showed considerable tenderness toward me. His letters to my mother reiterate his attempt to comfort me in her absence. He tried to compensate, in an older brotherly way, for the insecurity caused by separation from my mother. I adored him and counted on him as an unfailing companion and protector.

In the weeks following the accident, my mother and Pops lived in a rented house in Kentfield, where my mother recuperated from the intricate surgery needed to save her partially severed leg. For months, I was cut off from seeing her since there was no doubt about C.E.S.W.'s being at her side. Finally a visit was arranged, an event never to be forgotten. The visit was prearranged with the assurance that C.E.S.W. would not be in evidence. My mother's sister, Mary Parton, who had come to Kentfield to help her stricken sister, confused the date of our visit. As my father and I approached the porch we saw my mother reclining in a chaise longue. Next to her, his arms about her shoulders, was C.E.S.W. This scene was too much for my father. Jealousy and hatred for the man he felt indirectly responsible for his son's death overwhelmed him. As we retreated through the garden he shouted hysterically, his words ringing through the air, "You killed your son, you killed your son!" I still remember my mother's sobbing and my fury at my father for his cruel accusation--and a sense of total desolation.

So far, the references I have made to my father have shown only his uncontrollable anger. Such a description of him is unfairly one-sided. Circumstances, which he vainly fought to alter, deprived him of his fondest expectations and distorted his emotions. His expectations in marriage were normal for the time; his high regard for women and willingness to share domestic chores, rare. He admired my mother's intellectual capacities, which he frequently acknowledged to be superior to his own, and was wholly sympathetic with her effort toward legalization of women's suffrage. He believed in encouraging women in the sciences and arts. (At a later time he engaged Julia Morgan, then a budding architect, to draw the plans for his Berkeley church.) His social liberalism (he called himself a Christian Socialist) had cost him his church in Cleveland. But he was a fundamentalist Christian, and as such adultery was inconceivable to him. When the blow fell the hurt and outrage were intensified by the status of his rival, who was not only a brilliant lawyer, handsome and urbane, but also inextricably married. To jealousy was added humiliation and disgrace. In vain he appealed to the first Mrs. Wood to remove the disgrace by releasing her husband from the marriage contract. She gave her Catholic faith as the reason for her refusal, saying in addition that she did not want her grandchildren to think of her as a divorced woman. Her children, all adults, stood firmly beside her -- all but the youngest daughter, Lisa, whose compassionate and loving nature enabled her both to comfort her mother and to understand the love her father had for my mother. The eldest son, precisely my mother's age, maintained an uncompromisingly critical stance toward his father and hostility towards my mother until a few years before her death. Suddenly, as though taken by a swift enlightenment, he wrote my mother to affirm his

realization of the depth and closeness of his father's and my mother's relationship, lamenting that this realization had not come before his father's death. For my mother, who longed for reconciliation with her Erskine's family, this was a poignant moment of fulfillment.

My father made frequent appeals to my mother to reconsider her decision to leave home and to return to him. He believed her to be the victim of a temporary infatuation, almost to a fever that would run its course. To him, Wood was a skillful enticer of women, persuasive enough to cause another man's wife to cast aside her Christian principles and to enter a life of sin. For years he held out the hope that "his Sara" would "see the light." Years after she was patently lost to him he would send her flowers on her birthday with the Biblical quote, "Love never faileth." My father's life was shattered. He had lost his wife, his Portland job was no longer tenable, his status was diminished, and as an inadvertent dark consequence of the separation, he had lost his son. My brother and I were the focus of his love. He gave us, in spite of his modest financial resources, a comfortable home in a "good" neighborhood, consistent medical care, music lessons, and excursions to the country, Yosemite and Big Sur, which we learned to love. I lived with my father until my seventeenth year, the year of the Berkeley fire. Our house was destroyed in the conflagration and, although friends of my father offered us temporary quarters, it seemed logical for me to join my mother in San Francisco. Instead of asking if I might go I simply announced (with pounding heart) my decision which, to my amazed relief, my father accepted without contest. After two decades of living alone he entered into a platonic marriage with a pious, churchly woman to whom he could confide his abiding dismay. On his deathbed my father said to her, "Tell Sara I forgive her." While still insisting on being wronged, his forgiveness was not only a capitulation, but also a loving surrender.

My father tried to protect us from what he passionately believed to be the evil influence of the doctrine of free love, openly endorsed and practiced by my mother and C.E.S.W. He viewed their relationship as ungodly and unprincipled. His children above all should be kept from contamination. What he could not comprehend was the complexity, depth, and endurance of their union. It was not the trivial affair of his imagining, but an affinity stemming from and nourished by a love of poetry, ardent commitment to social change, and compassion for human suffering. Ironically enough, it was the tenderness, warmth, compatibility, and mutual devotion that set my mother and C.E.S.W. apart as having an ideal marriage. In her oral history, my mother says "...we were willing to make almost any sacrifice on earth to establish a life together." One of those sacrifices was to relinquish custody of her children to my father -- a condition necessary to obtain her divorce. My brother and I never questioned the "rightness" of the relationship between our mother and Pops. On the contrary, we believed in and defended it, in spite of experiencing occasional social ostracism.

Their rapport was so profound, their delight in one another so fulfilling that they might easily have shut out the world. On the contrary, their home whether on Russian Hill, or later at The Cats in Los Gatos, became a gathering place for poets, musicians, civil libertarians, and leaders of the Jewish cultural community, some of whom Pops had known through his legal connection with the banking firm of Lazard Frères. Mother and Pops were fearless. Two startling instances come to mind. The first had to do with the suffrage campaign. My mother agreed to attend a play, in a San Francisco theater, which portrayed Woodrow Wilson. She agreed, further, to rise in the middle of the play to say, "Mr. President, when will you support the suffrage amendment?" The local suffrage group had guaranteed the presence of a large contingent of their membership which would loudly applaud my mother's question. Unfortunately only a few turned up and instead of thundering applause one heard only the delicate clapping of a few gloved hands. It was said that the actor went white under his white paint. My face (for she had taken me with her for moral support) was flaming with embarrassment. The deed done, but not the play, we rose to leave. The ladies whom we passed on the way out drew their skirts aside in distaste. I was proud of my mother's courage, but hated to see her shunned.

On another occasion, my mother and Pops and Bishop Parsons, of Grace Cathedral, were scheduled to address a meeting to protest the draft (in World War I). The newspapers had announced that the first three speakers (they were the first three) would be arrested. I attended the meeting with apprehension and fear. The hall was filled with police. I fully expected to see my mother and Pops hauled off to jail. They spoke firmly and with deep conviction. No move was made to arrest them, for what I could not have known as a child of eight was the reluctance, at that time, to arrest people of standing in the community. Apparently, however, my father was apprehensive too, for he told me that he had gone to the meeting with sufficient funds to bail my mother out, had the newspaper predictions come true.

It is little wonder that -- devastated by my brother's death, the pain intensified by her inadvertent role at the wheel -- my mother should eventually have a severe nervous breakdown. While her son's death was for her the ultimate personal tragedy, anyone familiar with her poems will recognize in her nature a despondent side. The breakdown, which she does not mention in her oral history, occurred several years after the auto accident, years shadowed by brooding and insomnia. Pops met this crisis in his usual steady, competent, caring way. The house at 1020 Broadway in San Francisco (which became their residence after Pops' final departure from Portland) was turned into a temporary hospital. Extraordinary precautions were necessary for her care. I was about fifteen years old at the time and had succeeded in overcoming my father's objections to regular visits to my mother. As a consequence I had come to accept and love Pops as a second father. Our concern for someone we each loved so dearly drew us together in a new mature, supportive way. We depended upon one another for comfort and hope, for his Sara and my mother was for the duration of the breakdown beyond our reach.

We had no way of knowing how long this isolation from her would last. When, in about a year's time, she regained her joyousness and will to live our own joy was inexpressible. Pops and I were bound together indissolubly by this long period of shared darkness.

But the event that brought all three of us in close and prolonged relationship as a family was a year of travel together in Europe. In 1923, Pops and Mother decided to go to Italy for an indefinite stay with the possibility of permanent residence abroad. They invited me to join them. I announced my decision to accompany them to my father who, to my surprise, put up no opposition. He did not answer, just looked at me steadily. His anger seemed spent and I felt a vague pity for him, a pity that has deepened with the years. From this time on Pops took first place as a father in my life. We roamed the museums of Naples, Rome, and Florence together. He had always been interested in painting--had, indeed, known some of the foremost American painters of the early part of the century--Ryder, Hassam, Weir--and had purchased their works. He was also an amateur painter. He was pleased with my response to painting and sculpture. For although my mother enjoyed the visual arts she was essentially a literary person. This bond between Pops and me was a deep satisfaction to my mother. My interest in art fostered by Pops' teaching, continued throughout my life.

It is apparent from what I have told of my childhood that my contacts with my mother were discontinuous. As a little child, I found the infrequency of our companionship vaguely unsettling, which may account for my mother's description of me as "very gloomy a great deal of the time." Continuity, however, is no guarantee of sympathetic companionship. While it was difficult to grow up in an adult world where I was expected to be more or less "on my own," there were considerable rewards. Poetry and gardens were my mother's enduring passions and she passed on a love of both to me. Poetry, especially, drew us close together. In her poem "Kay" the gloom has become "A shy deep stream of sombre water" from which she finds healing.

Discussions of poetry were an accompaniment to nearly every meal. For Sara and Erskine work was always in progress, and the conversation would center on the current manuscript. From my early teens, I entered into the turbulent literary discussions, never patronized nor put down. Literary friends treated me with equal seriousness. Genevieve Taggard wrote in the copy she gave me of her book, For Eager Lovers, "For Kay Field, who helped with the title." While working on her first volume of poems, The Pale Woman, my mother habitually submitted each poem for my opinion. The book is dedicated "To Albert, a young son who is not here to read, and to Katherine, a young daughter who has read and understood."

I acquired early a favorable bias toward "literary" people who seemed to me to have exceptional liveliness and charm. This partiality toward writers may have caused me to be drawn on first acquaintance to Jim Caldwell. At the time of our meeting he was teaching in the English department of the University of Wisconsin. Meeting him was indirectly the result of my mother's

earlier suffrage activities for she had campaigned for the suffrage amendment with Mrs. Robert La Follette, Sr. When I decided to go to the University of Wisconsin my mother gave me a letter to Mrs. La Follette, who promptly invited me to the La Follette farm outside Madison. It was there that I met Jim. He was an intimate friend of the La Follette family; his college roommate had been Phil La Follette, later governor of Wisconsin.

Jim came out to California in the summer of 1925 to meet Erskine and Sara, the summer's trip conveniently financed by a teaching post at Dominican College. From their first meeting on the Los Gatos hill there was an understanding between them that deepened with the years. My mother and Pops could not have had a more congenial son-in-law. Jim and I were married at The Cats in 1929, under a great spreading live oak which stood at the center of a little amphitheater dedicated to music and poetry. Characteristically, Mother and Pops made a festival of the occasion. Details of the ceremony and the celebration following are told with great affection by them in a book called The Beautiful Wedding.

After receiving his Ph.D. at Harvard, Jim was invited to join the English department at the University of California at Berkeley. Los Gatos was not too far away. The interplay between the academic life as we knew it at Berkeley and the artistic life burgeoning at "The Cats" would take too long to describe. The four of us shared one another's friends. At The Cats, we made friends with Robin and Una Jeffers, William Rose Benet, and Yehudi Menuhin. In Berkeley, we introduced Sara and Erskine to Alex and Helen Meiklejohn, Josephine Miles, and Walter Hart. The intimate interweaving of our lives in Berkeley and Los Gatos continued for fifteen years.

Sara's life with Erskine ended in 1944 with Erskine's death, when he was just short of ninety-two years old. The gap between their ages -- thirty years -- was now a formidable reality, for she faced thirty years of life alone. For several years she stayed on at The Cats, attended by a faithful Italian couple, the Marengos. Sara directed the intensity of her sorrow into preparing a book of Erskine's collected poems, published by the Vanguard Press in 1949. She was encouraged in this undertaking by William Rose Benet, who wrote the introduction. Sara, in addition to choosing the poems, wrote a foreword in which she summarized Erskine's social philosophy.

When Mary and Vincent Marengo were forced by illness and age to retire, the burden of running The Cats became too heavy. No couple could replace the devoted, hard-working Marengos. To find any adequate domestic help in war time was virtually impossible, for the war industries, with their high wage scale, absorbed the best of the labor market. A move to Berkeley was the logical step, although for my mother, a melancholy break with the past. Jim and I helped her with the difficult task of moving the belongings she wanted to keep, disposing of the cumbersome accumulations of a lifetime, and finding a comfortable house in Berkeley.

To find a setting as rural as the Los Gatos hillside was of course impossible. But after a long search we found a stream-side house built deep in the woods of Chabot Canyon, in Northeast Oakland. She took with her many of the beautiful furnishings from The Cats: Chinese furniture and rugs, pictures by Hassam and Weir, a library of poetry, her Steinway piano, and her noble affectionate police dog, Barda. Once she settled, she began planning a garden, harmonious to the woodland setting. She was an intuitive landscape architect. Some people garden for exercise. For Sara, gardening was creative thinking in greens and colored petals. She used to say that most gardens exist in the mind, meaning that the plants one chose for hopeful simultaneous blooming did not always oblige. But for her, they bloomed as punctually and luxuriantly as the pictured flowers in the garden catalogues.

Planning the garden and modifying the house structure were healing distractions from the painful parting from Los Gatos, and to this new setting Mother brought her special kind of pleasurable concentration. She continued to support the many humanitarian causes with which she had been long identified, especially the American Civil Liberties Union, on whose board she served. She entertained her friends and enjoyed a special friendship with Walter Hart, whom she frequently met for long afternoons of literary interchange.

Her pleasure in her new environment was considerable, but all too brief. A surveyor's mark posted on her property was an ominous sign that this small paradise would come to an end. The real estate agent who sold her the property had kept from her the fact that a freeway was planned to cut through her canyon.

Jim and I found her a house close to our own -- architect-designed and surrounded by a garden. To the east was a wooded lot which she eventually purchased. But she was never satisfied with this new location and mourned the loss of the house by the stream.

For some years she continued a mentally active life. It was at this time that she was interviewed for her oral history. But a series of strokes made her dependent on nursing care and shut her away from the active world. In spite of her integrity and strength, I do not think that she recovered psychologically from Erskine's death. In her mind, and in the minds of the many who had known them, Erskine and Sara were inseparable. Albert Bender, a devoted friend, had, in earlier days commissioned Ed Grabhorn to print a volume of selected poems by S.B.F. and C.E.S.W. He asked Jim Caldwell to write the foreword; in it he said, "It is altogether right that their notable companionship should be symbolized by this physical binding together of their poems, which, since they seem often to start from the rich impulse of a shared life, are already closely interbound." For Sara Bard Field Wood, although she tried bravely to carry on alone, her life, in its deepest meaning, ended with his.

Katherine Field Caldwell

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INDEX--Katherine Field Caldwell

- Abramowitsch, Bernard and Eva, 71-72
 Adams, Ansel, 68-69
 Addams, Jane, 53-54
 Alma Trio, 74
 American Civil Liberties Union, board, 71, 127-128
 Anderson, Judith, 124, 131-132
 Anderson, Marian, 78
 Anna Head School, Berkeley, 127, 156
 Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 208, 215ff-222, 230-231, 238

 Baller, Adolph, 71, 74
 Bender, Albert, 75, 169-170
 Benedict, Burton, 167
 Bennett, Mary Woods, 190, 197
 Berkeley: Art Commission, 25; parks, 25; public schools, 24, 56-57, 86-87, 126-127, 130, 156-157; University and Shattuck Avenues, 25; Vine Lane, 23, 27
 Berkeley fire, 1923, 23, 58-60, 232
 Berkeley High School, 56-57, 86-87, 130, 156-157
 Berkeley Piano Club, 73
 bicycling, 28
 Billings, Warren K., 22-23
 Bingham, Edwin, 62
 Bingham, Woodbridge and Ursula, 159
 Bissinger, Marjorie [now Marjorie Seller], 214
 Bogas, Roy, 71
 Boodberg, Peter, 189
 Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 110, 112-113, 209, 222
 Boynton, Ray, 74, 231
 Bronson, Bertrand H. "Bud" and Mildred, 121-122, 124, 126, 142, 150-151

 Browne, Maurice and Nellie [Ellen] 62, 65
 Brundage, Avery, 113, 216-218, 222ff-228
 Brundage, Elizabeth, 223
 Brundage Collection, 198-200, 209ff-228
 Bufano, Beniamino, 34, 74-75, 237

 Caen, Estelle, 148
 Cahill, James, 117, 215-217, 220, 224
 Calder, Alexander, 233
 Caldwell, Dan, 87, 141, 147ff-159, 229, 236
 Caldwell, James R., 31, 33, 44, 58, 60, 79-80, 87, 96, 98-103, 111, 114, 118ff-173, 169, 192, 210, 215, 224, 230ff-240
 Caldwell, Sara, 10, 44, 87, 120, 127, 130, 147ff-159, 229
 California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 115-116, 164-165, 171-172
 Campbell, Joseph, 235
 Cardwell, Kenneth, 232
 Carmel, California, Peter Pan Inn, 137; Point Lobos, 28, 31
 Cats, The, Los Gatos, 46, 72, 77-78, 84-85, 103, 152
 Chicago Art Institute, 51-52, 87, 210, 223-224
 Chinatown, San Francisco, 26, 230
 Cline, James M. and Jane, 121-122, 142, 150-151
 Clinton, Hillary Rodham, 142
 communism, 65
 Congregational Church, Berkeley, 130
 Coomaraswamy, Ananda Kent, 113
 Coppa's Restaurant, San Francisco, 76
 Cowan, Geoffrey, 55

- d'Argencé, René-Yvon, 183, 215-218
 Darrow, Clarence, 11-15, 55, 150
 Dennes, William R. "Will" and Margaret, 125
 deYoung Museum, San Francisco, 164-165, 167, 171
 Dillon, Percy, 20
 Draft Board, 128-129
 Dumas, Raphael, 107
 Durant, Kenneth, 61
 Durham, Willard "Bull", 120-121, 132-134

 Ealy, Caro Weir, 239
 East-West Arts Foundation, San Francisco, 183
 Ehgott, Albert, 1-6, 13, 17-22, 24-25, 27-32, 36, 38-42, 56-60, 68, 83, 95, 101-102
 Ehgott, Albert Field, 2-9, 11, 14, 20-22, 25-26, 33-34, 36-43, 54, 64, 239
 Ehgott, Mabel, 27, 83
 Eliot, T.S., 123, 238
 Elkus, Albert, 39, 71, 73, 134, 146
 Emmett, Dorothy, 105-106, 108
 Erskine, Dorothy and Morse, 72, 201, 210, 213-214
 Esherick, Joseph, 153-154

 Fairbank, John, 98, 100, 106
 Field, Eugene, 7
 Field, Marion, 15
 Field, Sara Bard, 1ff
 Fleishhacker, Mortimer, 116
 Fontein, Jan, 221-222
 Frankenstein, Alfred, 202
 Freer Gallery, Washington, D.C., 222, 237
 Friends of Far Eastern Art, 183-184
 Fromm Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of San Francisco, 204
 Fry, Amelia Roberts, 22

 Gale, Zona, 93
 Gilson, Etienne, 104-105
 Golden Gate International Exposition, Treasure Island, 1939-1940, 33, 165-168, 174, 180-182
 Grabhorn, Edwin, 63-65, 198
 Green, Cornelia, 104, 110
 Griffing, Robert, 200, 209-210, 224
 Gump's [store], San Francisco, 168, 200, 209

 Haas, Elise, 174, 176-177, 183, 199
 Hart, Walter Morris, 122-123, 126
 Harvard University, Fogg Museum, 110, 112, 114-116
 Hassam, Childe, 76, 87, 229
 Hayes, Peggy Calder, 233
 Horn, Walter, 178-179, 198
 Howe, Thomas Carr, 165
 Huff, Elizabeth, 169
 Hughes, Langston, 78
 Hull House, Chicago, 52-54

 International Ladies Garment Workers Union, 211

 Jeffers, Una and Robinson, 133-137, 236, 238
 Jewish families, San Francisco 55-56
 Johannsen, Homer, 52, 94
 Johannsen, Margaret, 52, 92
 Jung, Carl Gustav, 107

 Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, University of Wisconsin, 98
 Keightley, David, 224-225
 Kennedy, Alma Schmidt, 23-24
 Kent, Alice, 210, 213
 Kent, Elizabeth [Mrs. William Kent, Sr.], 51
 Key Route, and Southern Pacific Railroad, Berkeley, 25-26
 Kluckholm, Clyde, 100, 106
 Kraus, Lili, 71
 Kroeber, Theodora, 234-235

 La Follette, Philip and Isabel, 93-94, 96
 Lauer, Eleanor, 196
 Lawton, Helena Steilberg, 121
 Lee, Ching Wah, 183, 185

- Lehman, Benjamin H., 103, 119-124, 131-134
 Lehman, Henriette Goodrich Durham, 107, 132-134, 201
 Lewis, R. E., 115, 233
 Liebes, Dorothy, 182-183
 Liebes, Leon, 75
 loyalty oath controversy, 137-141
 Luhan, Mabel Dodge, 136
 Luhan, Tony, 68
 Lutzker, Mary-Ann, 208

 Maenchen, Anna, 162, 179-180
 Maenchen, Otto, 175, 178-180, 185-186, 189-190, 194, 198, 227
 Malone, Dudley Field, 93
 Marengo, Vincent and Mary, 77-78, 103, 153, 160
 Martin, Anne, 22
 Masters, Edgar Lee, 64
 Maybeck, Bernard, 23, 232, 234
 McGiffert, Elizabeth and Arthur, 161
 McGillicuddy, Padrian, 119
 McLaughlin, Sylvia, 213
 Meiklejohn, Alexander, 96-98, 128, 146
 Meiklejohn, Helen, 48-49
 Menuhin, Hepzibah, 73
 Menuhin, Yaltah, 73
 Menuhin, Yehudi, 71-72, 74, 148
 Meyer, Agnes Ernst [Mrs. Eugene Meyer], 93
 Miles, Josephine, 143-145
 Milhaud, Darius, 73, 186
 Mills College, 169-171, 175, 183, 186, 188, 190ff-208, 231; music department, 73
 Ming, Chinese servant, 66
 Minor, Lydia and Bob, 92
 Morley, Grace McCann, 116, 165, 173-177
 Muscatine, Charles, 140

 Nara, Japan, and Nara Ehon, 187, 204-207
 Neumeyer, Alfred, 186, 190, 198, 202

 Packard, Harry, 226-227

 Panama Pacific International Exposition, 1915, 19;
 Suffragists booth [Congressional Union], 22
 Parkinson, Thomas F. "Tom," 139
 Parsons, Marion, 131
 Parton, Lemuel, 17, 19, 150
 Parton, Mary Field, 12-13, 17, 19-20, 42, 53, 55, 65, 84-85, 150
 Paul, Alice, 22, 53
 Pepper, Stephen C., 185-187
 Point Lobos, California, 28, 31
 Post, Chandler, 111
 Potter, Beatrix, 30-31
 Pound, Ezra, 90-91
 Powys, John Cowper, 64
 Powys, Llewelyn, 64, 67
 Prieto, Antonio, 191
 Pulitzer, Anita, 92

 Radcliffe College, 103ff-116
 Reicher, Hedwiga, 62
 Reinhardt, Aurelia Henry, 169-170, 186, 197
 Rejto, Gabor, 74, 148, 155
 Rivera, Diego, 182
 Rollins, Lloyd, 165
 Ross, John and Nancy, 125-126, 150-151
 Rothwell, Easton and Ginny, 193
 Rowell, Galen, 156
 Rowell, Margaret, 142, 148, 155-156
 Ruch, Barbara, 205
 Rukeyser, Muriel, 133
 Rukeyser, William L., 133
 Ryder, Albert Pinkham, 75, 87-88

 Sachs, Paul, 115-116
 St. Mary's College, Moraga, California, 202-203
 Salmony, Alfred, 169-170, 183-184, 186, 188, 197
 Salz, Helen and Ansley, 70-71, 128
 San Francisco art museums. See California Palace of the Legion of Honor; Asian Art Museum; San Francisco Museum of Art.
 San Francisco Arts Commission, 116

San Francisco Museum of Art, and Women's Board, 165, 171-172, 174-176
 Sanford, Christine and Nevitt, 142-143
 Santayana, George, 107
 Schaeffer, Rudolph, 180-181, 183-185
 Schafer, Edward, 189
 Schorer, Mark and Ruth, 138
 Schumann-Heink, Ernestine, 73
 Shangraw, Clarence, 222
 Shiota, Mr., [art dealer, San Francisco], 129, 168
 Sickman, Laurence, 227-228
 Smith, Lisa Wood, 36, 103
 Society for Asian Art, 183, 210ff-225, 235
 Stackpole, Ralph, 69-70, 74, 175-176, 230, 238
 Steffens, Lincoln, 65-66, 136
 Steffens, Pete, 136
 Steilberg, Walter, 118-119, 121
 Stern, Marjorie, 210-211, 213-214
 Stevens, Doris, 93
 Stewart, George R., 140
 Storey, Morfield, 103
 Strong, Edward W. "Ed", 141, 155, 159
 Sullivan, Michael, 216, 220
 Sullivan, Noel, 78-79, 103, 119, 136-137, 201
 Taggard, Genevieve, 61-62, 81, 239
 Temple of the Wings, Berkeley, Boynton family, 24
 Thomas, Dylan, 137-139
 Tolman, Edward and Kathleen, 125, 129, 139-140, 143
 Toth, Andor, 74
 Town and Gown Club, Berkeley, 33
 Twachtman, John Henry, 75, 87

Ulysses, 90

University of California, Berkeley, Department of Art, 185-186; Department of English, 118ff-152; Extension Division, 127; stadium, 31. See loyalty oath controversy.
 University of Wisconsin, 96-100

Van Volkenburg, Ellen [Mrs. Maurice Browne], 92, 94
 Vernon, Mabel, 22
 Warner, Langdon, 110-113, 166-169, 171, 181ff-187, 227
 Warner, Olin, 238
 Weir, Julian Aulin, 239
 Welch, Marie, 134
 Whipple, T. K. and Mary Ann, 125
 White, John, 232, 234
 White, Lynn, 190-193, 200
 Whitehead, Alfred North, 104-106, 195
 Winter, Ella, 136
 Wold, Emma, 22
 Wolfe, Bob, 61-62
 Woman Geographers, 234-235
 Women's Party, 11, 43, 48, 96; meeting, Washington, D.C., 1921, 10, 51-55
 Wood, Charles Erskine Scott, 3, 9, 15, 17, 27, 32, 34-51, 54, 58ff-95, 97, 102-103, 110, 118, 128-129, 136-137, 152-153,, 160-162, 229ff-240
 Wormser, Robert, 55-56
 Wright, Cedric, 69
 Yanagi, Soetsu, 113
 Yosemite National Park, 9, 28, 31
 Young, Ella, 119-129

Zen Center, Berkeley, 238

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